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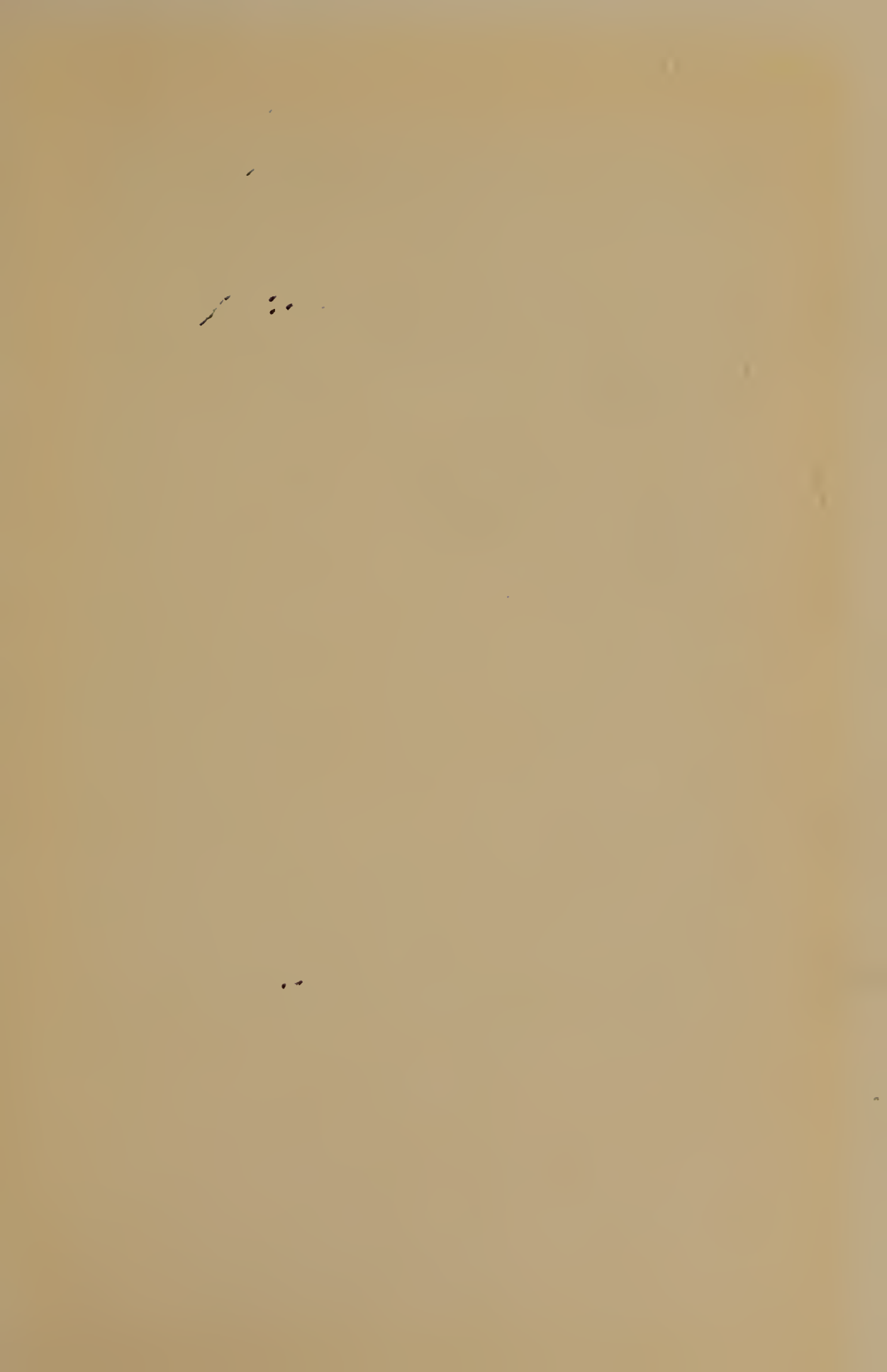
JOHN EDWARD BERNARD STAGG (1868-1947)
BRITISH POLITICIAN

MUCH OF WW I, WITH STAGG COMMANDING THE
CANADIAN CAVALRY BRIGADE WITH MUCH SUCCESS.

FALLS p. 230



ADVENTURE





THE AUTHOR

From a portrait in the Imperial War Museum by Sir William Orpen, R.A.

ADVENTURE

By

MAJOR-GENERAL

THE RT. HON. J. E. B. SEELY

P.C., C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

With Illustrations from Portraits by

SIR WILLIAM ORPEN, R.A.

& A. J. MUNNINGS, R.A.

&

An Introduction by

THE RT. HON.

THE EARL OF BIRKENHEAD

P.C., G.C.S.I.



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To my Comrades
of the Canadian Cavalry,
to whose intrepid courage
in England's darkest hour
Marshal Foch pays tribute
in the closing words of this
book.

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FOREWORD

My grateful thanks are due to all those who have helped me in compiling this book. To Madame Foch, Mrs. Botha and others who have permitted me to publish letters; to Sir Maurice Hankey whose vigilant eye has saved me from many errors; to Sir Martin Conway and the officials of the Imperial War Museum for much kind help; to my friends Sir William Orpen and Mr. A. J. Munnings, by whose permission I am able to reproduce some paintings done in France; to Major Peake, M.C. of the Geographical Section of the General Staff who has rendered invaluable assistance in the preparation of the maps of the Western Front, and above all to my wife, without whose constant help this book could never have been completed.

J. E. B. S.

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INTRODUCTION

BY

THE RT. HON. THE EARL OF BIRKENHEAD, P.C., G.C.S.I.

IT is with very great pleasure that I respond to my friend General Seely's invitation to write a few words by way of introduction to this volume of his memories.

I am confident that the public which reads it—and it should command, as it deserves, a large circulation—will learn, as his innumerable friends have already done, that few men of our day have experienced so many and various adventures; none, I think, can ever have displayed so much gusto in their telling.

He claims in his opening chapter, and abundantly proves in those which follow, that he has survived, not once but often, an apparently certain death by each of the four elements: earth, air, fire and water. No man can claim more. But this is only one side of his career. He has held high administrative office, fought with the utmost gallantry in two great wars, acted for many years as a member of a famous lifeboat crew, and practised at the Bar.

I do not wish to anticipate the incidents which are recounted in this book, and therefore I will confine myself to telling a story, certainly apocryphal, of Jack Seely's career as a barrister.

It is reported that he once defended, but without success, a man accused of murder. As the unfortunate man was removed from the dock, after sentence had been passed on him, his counsel is said to have assured him with great earnestness that "It will at least be a satisfaction to you to know, before you face your Maker, that everything which forensic ability could contribute has been done on your behalf."

For such anecdotes to be invented about Jack Seely is, in

INTRODUCTION

reality, a high tribute to him. They demonstrate that he is not merely a remarkable man, but also a legend in his lifetime. They speak also for his popularity. I myself have for long delighted in hearing stories about him which would not have been out of place as passages in the history of a modern Odysseus. After reading the pages which follow, I declare in all seriousness and without the smallest ironic intention that no need whatever exists to add to his extraordinary adventures any which are not wholly authentic. Jack Seely's truth is as strange as his biographers' fiction; as, indeed, was largely true of the D'Artagnan whom Dumas immortalised.

A contemporary or future Dumas might consider taking Jack Seely as the principal hero of a book of adventure no whit less sensational than *The Three Musketeers*. He would find him as gay, as gallant, as debonair, and, often, as rash as D'Artagnan. But whereas, as we now know, Dumas was dependent on the historical researches of his collaborator, Auguste Maquet, for the groundwork of his stories, his successor will find in the following pages both hero and incidents described at first hand and waiting only for the pen of genius to transform them into an epic of modern adventure.

So perhaps, if this hint of mine is acted on, our grandchildren and their contemporaries in every continent will learn to thrill at the name of Jack Seely. The setting of his career—our own days—is, after all, not really less romantic than seventeenth-century France; the hero, and writer, of the present volume is as outstanding a character as the greatest of the Musketeers.

One further thing, however, must be said, and in a more serious vein. Reckless though he may have been of his own life in the Great War, Seely did at all times work and think and plan to give the brave Canadian cavalrymen whom he commanded, and to whom Marshal Foch paid a noble tribute, the best chance in battle. Canada, I am sure, will never forget this.

BIRKENHEAD.

ADVENTURE

CHAPTER I

Living Dangerously—The "Tree of Liberty"—Childhood—Harry Brown V.C.—Narrow Escapes—Drowning Sensations—Harrow—Dr. Welldon—A Runaway Horse.

THAT German philosopher who taught the doctrine of "living dangerously" might well have claimed me as an involuntary and very lucky disciple; for events have shaped my life into a regular (though far from monotonous) succession of adventure and escape. Each of the elements, earth, air, fire and water, has threatened me in turn. I have been drowned, and revived by artificial respiration; fallen a greater distance than is thought possible for survival, and yet still live; faced a hostile rifle at fifteen yards, when a miss was impossible, and been unaccountably spared; experienced a burst petrol tank at four thousand feet in mid-air, yet not been burned to death; and over and over again on the Western Front have found myself alone unharmed when every one of those around me has been killed or wounded. My escape from these perils has been due to good fortune rather than to any form of judgment. Moreover, I have seen with my own eyes acts of heroism performed by others so extraordinary as to be almost unbelievable. Such experiences have left me with an abiding sense of gratitude to the unseen hand which has protected me so often, and a profound suspicion of all that pretends to be infallible or impossible. The cares of office and the carelessness of freedom alike have taught me that neither things nor people are ever as bad as they seem; that no venture is so forlorn that it cannot be carried through, no emotion so great that it cannot be borne; that good fortune seldom deserts the resolute; and that no man, even if he be a politician or priest, is so devious or devout as the world supposes.

I was born at Brookhill Hall, on the borders of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, a place which my father then rented, it being near the family collieries which he was managing for my grandfather. My grandfather lived at Brooke, in the Isle of Wight. He had been for many years the Liberal Member for Lincoln. Indeed, before his death, although not the Father of the House, he was the oldest member in years. He was an austere and very benevolent man, very small of stature, with aquiline features; and though he looked frail, had, in fact, an iron constitution. At the age of eighty-one he would ride round his Isle of Wight estate on his pony for four or five hours at a stretch. He defended the aspirations of the Chartists in the House of Commons. It was he who invited General Garibaldi to England in 1864; he brought him to stay at Brooke for a week on his way to London, and again for a few days before he returned to Italy. Garibaldi planted an oak tree opposite the front door as a sapling, it now flourishes exceedingly. We call it the "Tree of liberty." It will be remembered that when Garibaldi arrived in London he was given the Freedom of the City, and that on his journey to the City and back he was acclaimed by crowds more vast than any that had assembled in living memory. The Austrians were much offended, and Queen Victoria became very perturbed at the excitement of the populace in acclaiming this revolutionary general. She urged that Garibaldi should be induced to return to Italy, and correspondence ensued between the Prime Minister of the day and my grandfather. Lord Morley recounts in his *Life of Gladstone* that he asked my father to give him the correspondence on the subject, but that nothing could be found. When I succeeded to Brooke in 1915 I had a further search made, but no doubt my grandfather had thought it wise to destroy the correspondence. Twenty-two years later, in August, 1887, my grandfather was asked to present the loyal address from the inhabitants of the Isle of Wight to Queen Victoria, on the occasion of her first Jubilee. He read the speech, and the Queen



BROOKE HOUSE
with Oak Tree planted by General Garibaldi in April 1864

handed a gracious reply. She then bent over the side of the carriage and said a few kindly words to my grandfather. At the end she said that she was glad to see him so well at his great age, and especially that it was he who had presented the address; there was a time, twenty-two years before, when they were not in such complete agreement. My grandfather bowed low, and, it is said, replied to the somewhat embarrassing sentence: "Well, Ma'am, I suppose as we get older we get wiser." Instead of being in the least offended by this enigmatic remark, Queen Victoria laughed heartily.

I well remember my grandmother, who was a Miss Hilton, from Newcastle. She had silvery hair, with silvery ringlet curls on each side of a face which radiated benevolence and sympathy. The people of Brooke loved her, and talk of her to this day. She christened the first lifeboat on our coast.

My father, was a Liberal Member of the House of Commons for twenty-five years, from the time I was one year old, with one interval in 1895. He was an enthusiastic volunteer; for more than twenty years he commanded a famous Volunteer Regiment, the Robin Hoods of Nottingham. Almost my earliest recollection is seeing him ride away in uniform on an extremely good looking bay thoroughbred. Indeed, I owe much to him.

My mother was of singular charm and beauty, as all who remember her will agree, especially her nine children, of whom I was the seventh. She was a Miss Evans, sister of the late Sir Francis Evans, the Member of Parliament for Southampton. From her I inherited my passionate love of music and the sea.

When I was three years old my father and mother migrated to Sherwood Lodge, in Nottinghamshire, where the greater part of my boyhood was spent. But although my grandfather at Brooke did not like being disturbed by children, he was very kind to them when he saw them. So I spent much of my time in the Isle of Wight, staying either at Mottistone with my aunt, the widow of the Rector of Shorwell; or at Pitt Place

with another aunt married to Colonel Browne, V.C., who managed my grandfather's estates. Both these places are on the lonely sea coast near Brooke. I had then, as I have now, in ever increasing degree, an insistent longing to be near the sea, and if possible, in it or on it. My uncle, Harry Browne, was one of my best and kindest friends. He had won his V.C. in the Indian Mutiny, during the siege of Lucknow. There was a gun in a circular redoubt about four hundred yards from the Residency, causing daily casualties to our small garrison. My uncle, who was a young lieutenant of the line, volunteered to lead a storming party to capture the redoubt by night. I tell the story as he told it to me. He divided his little party of fifteen into two groups, one to be led by his sergeant, the other by himself. They were to approach the redoubt from two sides so as to make sure of the intervening ground before delivering the attack. When my uncle with his party arrived at the closed embrasure from which the gun fired in the day-time, the sergeant with the remainder had not come up. He waited for five minutes, but still he had not come. He knew that the Sepoys would shortly relieve guard, and that the only chance was to attempt the capture of the redoubt with the men he had with him. The embrasure was about nine feet from the ground, and was covered by a shutter. My uncle climbed on the shoulders of one of his men and slid back the shutter, disclosing the muzzle of the gun. He told me that it was an exciting moment when he managed to clamber on to the gun, with his stomach resting against the muzzle. He crawled along the gun to the breech, and there saw the gunner fast asleep. By this time the sergeant had arrived, and had clambered on to the gun behind him, followed by the rest. The noise woke the gunner, but my uncle shot him with his revolver. With the aid of the sergeant and the others he drew back the gun from the embrasure, turned it round and fired into the garrison of the fort, who had wakened up and were shouting and screaming at the far end, where the entrance was. The surprise was so

complete that the whole garrison, less those who were killed by the discharge of the gun, ran screaming through the opening to the Sepoy lines. My uncle spiked the gun himself, and then with his men retired by the way he had come. It is not surprising that he won the Victoria Cross, and that all his men received other rewards. He would talk of his experiences to no one else, but to me he told this and similar tales of adventure. It was he who first set me thinking over the problem of fear. I well remember walking along the beach and reflecting that being frightened was a foolish thing, like biting one's nails; obviously it did no good. I set to work then to try to overcome this failing; and though I have never succeeded, the constant conscious attempt has been very helpful.

It was while staying with my uncle that an interesting experience befell me, which is worth recording.

The red cliffs at my home between the limestone at St. Catherines and the chalk cliffs near Freshwater vary in height from 250 to 100 feet. One winter's day I was walking along these cliffs between Brighstone and Brooke, sometimes clambering down a little way where the upper part of the cliff stood at an angle of about forty-five degrees. Below this was a belt of sandstone with a perpendicular fall, varying from sixty to a hundred feet, to the beach below. With a rumble the sandy earth on which I was standing began to move. With feverish haste I tried to scramble up the forty-five degrees' slope of moving earth, but I could move nothing like fast enough. Vividly I remember a final clutch at a tuft of grass, and then shooting out into the air. During those moments when trying to avoid going over that miniature precipice I was filled with mortal dread, being sure that the fall must mean certain death. But when I found myself poised in mid-air all sensation of fear vanished. I was fully conscious; at intervals, as I turned over and over, I could see the cliff apparently sliding upwards at great speed, but there was no actual sensation of falling. I seemed to be just happily dreaming suspended in space.

Professor Eddington, the great collaborator of Einstein, has since explained to me why this must be so. Certainly so it was.

I woke to find myself lying on my back with my face covered with loose earth, looking up through a narrow opening to the sky. It was much darker than when I fell, and I vaguely wondered where I was. I tried to move, but at first found it impossible, all my body ached. At last I was able to drag myself wearily out of the hole which my weight had made in the soft earth, and with some difficulty to reach the beach. I afterwards found that I had been lying there for two hours, and that my vertical fall had been well over seventy feet. Many tons of loose earth which had fallen from the top of the cliff had reached the beach a few seconds before my body fell, thus forming a perfect cushion for my landing. It was an astonishing escape, with this merit, from my point of view, that it proved to me that fear was foolish, and that no case, however desperate, is ever hopeless. Incidentally the slight injuries I received gave me a term's holiday from school.

Having thus had all the sensations of a fatal fall, my next experience was that of being drowned. There was a foolish contest, called "Diving for Eggs," at which I had become proficient and confidently hoped to win the prize. I had picked up seven at my first attempt. My only competitor responded by picking up eight. I dived again, determined to win, swam along the bottom of the swimming-bath and quickly picked up seven. To my dismay I saw the remainder were four or five yards away. I started to swim to them with my disengaged hand, and remember more vividly than any other experience in my life the moment of real agony when I realised that I must take breath; the will was sufficiently strong to overcome this great desire, and I took another stroke. Then all at once the pain and agony ceased. It was as though when some great orchestra has been playing crashing and discordant sounds, suddenly the music is resolved into a beautiful major chord with every instrument in perfect tune. Then I found myself walking

over a green field in glorious sunshine, with bright yellow buttercups studding the grass, in the distance church bells were ringing, and I had a sensation of complete joy and happiness. I was fished out, black in the face and unconscious, and was finally brought to by artificial respiration. The process of coming to was extraordinarily painful; pins and needles everywhere in their most acute form. It is a curious fact that many years afterwards I met an officer in the Merchant Service who also had been drowned and restored by artificial respiration. He recounted precisely similar sensations—green grass, yellow buttercups, church bells, the joy and happiness, all were there. The ship's doctor was present, and he said there must be some psychological reason, connected with the nerve centres still surviving when the heart ceases to beat, which would explain the phenomenon.

I had five very happy years at Harrow. It was there that I first met the man who, after my brother Frank, was to be my greatest friend, Tom Conolly, of Castletown, the great-great-grandson of the last speaker of the Irish House of Commons. All who knew him will agree that had he not been killed in the South African War, he might have rendered outstanding service to Ireland and to the Empire. Stanley Baldwin, too, was there with me—I was his fag, and he has been kind enough to say that I made him good buttered eggs. I liked, admired, and feared him. Now the fear has gone; but the other two sentiments remain. Edward Grenfell, also, was my contemporary; then, as now, good-humoured and wise. Winston Churchill was much my junior. It is a reproach to Harrow that the school curriculum was so rigid that his brilliant intellectual qualities received so little recognition. We began at Harrow a close and intimate friendship, which I rejoice to know continues to this day.

Tom and I were inseparable friends, and constantly in trouble, which never interfered with our happiness. In my very last term, when I had been nearly two years in the Sixth Form, we were involved in an escapade which nearly ended in

disaster for us both. The celebration of Queen Victoria's first Jubilee seemed to us an appropriate occasion to hoist the Union Jack on the spire of Harrow Church. The trouble was how to get there. We suborned the sexton and reconnoitred the ancient spire. Our first idea was to climb up the outside as we had seen a steeplejack do, but we soon found that this was impossible; at the same time we discovered that there was a small door at the top of the spire through which we could probably force out the national flag. The cross beams inside the spire were far apart. As it would be impossible to transport ladders without the Church authorities finding out what we were doing we bought a child's bow and arrow, a ball of string and about ten fathom of stout rope. Tying the string to the arrow after many attempts we shot it over the first beam, then we pulled the rope over the beam and one of us climbed up it and dragged the other after him. Tom was generally the more inventive of us two, but I claim the credit for this idea, because I had learnt it when I had seen the rocket apparatus used at home—a thin line is shot over a wreck and those on board haul in the thicker rope. We repeated this operation four times, and so got to the top of the spire. There was just room for the two of us. With our united efforts we pushed open the door sufficiently by resting our backs against the steeple and pushing with our feet, then, through the opening, put out the Union Jack furled on a pole, unrolled it, tied the pole securely and slid down the full length of rope to the bottom of the spire.

The next morning I went off with six other boys to Westminster Abbey, forming part of a deputation from Harrow School on this august occasion. We were perched high up in a temporary gallery at the west end of the nave, representatives from other schools being close to us. We could see the great Queen far, far away at the east end, with the sun shining through the windows falling upon the throne. The kneeling Archbishop and vivid uniforms linger in my memory. I was to see Queen Victoria on three subsequent occasions, not far



THE AUTHOR'S HOME
Mottistone Manor, Isle of Wight

away, but very near. It was a strange thing about that remarkable woman that whether near or far she created in the onlooker a feeling of awe and reverence, not due to her great position and power, but to some aura which seemed to emanate from her. Efforts have been made to belittle this extraordinary character, but be it observed, by none of those who knew her.

Next day, at lunch, I sat next to the Headmaster, Dr. Welldon, in the Headmaster's House dining hall. The head of the house was laid up and I was acting head. Welldon seemed a little taciturn. By way of conversation I said to him. "It is a curious thing, sir, that the Union Jack is flying from the top of Harrow steeple; I wonder how it got there." As I said it I saw Tom's laughing blue eyes fixed on mine. The headmaster paused for a moment and then said: "Yes, I saw it last night, some foolhardy lunatics must have put it there. If they were boys in this school and I could find them I would flog them and dismiss them from the school." My heart beat faster as I said: "Wouldn't that be a little severe, sir?" He turned on me and said, "No, it would serve them right." Many years afterwards I stayed with Dr. Welldon, at the Deanery, at Durham, and for the first time since the episode asked him if he remembered it. He gave a Homeric shout of laughter and said: "Of course, I knew that you and Tom had done it all along." I said: "How! Did the sexton tell on us?" He replied: "No, but you were the only two in the school who could have been so foolish as to risk it."

From Harrow I went to Trinity College, Cambridge. At the end of my first year an event happened which altered the whole course of my life. Due to no merit or real scholarship on my part, but to a curious knack in examinations, I had been for nearly two years in the Sixth Form at Harrow. My tutor urged me to take two triposes—Classics and Law—and to this I agreed. It would have involved much hard reading in my second and especially in my third year, with some kind of a career in the diplomatic service or at the Bar to follow. But

all this was ended by my being knocked on the head in September, 1888, under the following circumstances. For many years Tom Conolly and I had spent our holidays together, either in Ireland or in the Isle of Wight. This year his mother took a villa at Davos, and Tom and I had a wonderful time mountaineering and chamois hunting, to the constant alarm of his mother and his little sister, Catherine, now Lady Carew. Tom returned to cram for the Army and I stayed on for a week. One day I took Catherine, as I had promised, for a ride up a mountain pass. She had a good, quiet pony; I had borrowed a horse from a wealthy American who had come to Davos to put himself under the care of Dr. Ruedi, the famous lung specialist. For some extraordinary reason this charming, but debilitated American, had chosen as a suitable mount for the occasion and the country, a weedy chestnut thoroughbred horse sixteen hands high, and of a wild disposition. The horse was all right when you got on his back, but the trouble was to get there. The only way was to let him go once you had got your foot in the stirrup, climb on as he galloped off, and pull him up later. On this particular day we started off most successfully. After riding a little way along the main road we turned off on to the disused coach-road which leads up a magnificent gorge with great precipices rising sheer above the road, cut out of the rock face, and falling equally steeply to the river below. We crossed several bridges without parapets—loose planks laid across parallel fir trees—spanning the streams, with quaint little notices in German commanding, “Not more than a foot’s pace under a penalty of five marks.” The sun was setting as we arrived at a little inn some way towards the head of the pass. There we dismounted and tied up our horses to rings in the wall, while the inn-keeper brought us two glasses of milk. The view of the black cliffs, and the dazzling snow peaks beyond turning rose in the setting sun, was of extraordinary beauty. But Catherine shivered, and said it was time to ride home. I told the landlord to hold my horse while I helped

her to mount, but the pony was impatient with the cold and danced about. The landlord very kindly came to help, and directly she was up the pony started to move away. My horse was already in his usual tempestuous state. I quickly got my foot in the stirrup, and, in spite of shouts from the landlord, which I did not understand, swung my right leg over the saddle. As the horse backed away I heard a crack. Before I had time to think what it was he was galloping wildly down the pass. As I gathered the reins I found the whole lot come forward into my hands. It was nearly dark, but as we swept round a bend in the road into the light of the sunset I saw his bare head silhouetted against the sky. What had happened was that the landlord had tied my horse to a ring in the wall when he came to help me to mount Catherine; as I was mounting the horse had run back, and with a jerk had broken the bridle at the headstall. The bit had, of course, fallen out of his mouth, and the whole concern was tangled round his near fore leg. I gathered up the reins and knotted them on his withers, threw away my hunting crop, and then found myself careering down the narrow stony track, with a precipice towering up on my right and another yawning on my left, at the full speed of a wild thoroughbred with no bridle to control him. There was plenty of time to think, for the track was quite straight for about half a mile. I leaned forward, got my forefinger into the corner of his mouth, and with many soothing adjurations tried to moderate his pace that way; but the only result was to turn his head without moderating his speed, so that he went nearly over the edge into the rushing stream two hundred feet below. I gave up this plan, and also a similar attempt to stop him by pulling both his ears. This nearly landed me over his head, so I sat back and tried to think what a man ought to do or resolve at such a moment. We approached one of the bridges. There was only a slight bend and the horse did not slacken his pace. He nearly skidded up, one plank was dislodged and went shimmering down into the stream. It seemed

to me that there was no possible escape, for I knew the horse was by this time quite mad with the excitement of unaccustomed freedom, and that a quarter of a mile further on there was another bridge with a right-angle turn. But then a miracle happened. Just before we got to this right-angled turn, in the narrow gorge there was a place where, many years before, when the road had been used for coaches, a broader track had been made to enable them to pass. It was just as we entered on this broad place that the horse elected to cross his legs and come down with a crash. At any other point in the road we must have gone over the edge, either at once or by cannoning off the wall of rock; but here, over and over we went nearly in the middle of the road, until I found myself lying on my face with my legs dangling over the chasm. I remember scrambling to my feet, going up to the unfortunate horse lying crumpled up and covered with blood, and trying to lift its head; after that I remembered nothing until I recovered consciousness forty-eight hours later in the villa at Davos. I afterwards learnt that little Catherine, with immense labour, had pulled me to the side of the road, bathed my head and tied it up; that by a strange coincidence a Swiss farmer's wife had chosen to have a baby that particular morning in the only house higher up the pass, and that therefore a doctor had come along in a tiny carriage specially constructed to traverse these narrow roads, and that I had thus been transported home. Certainly I would not be alive to-day but for little Catherine. My grateful thanks to her and to the unknown Swiss doctor, if he is still alive. My eldest brother came out to Davos to fetch me home, and with the aid of air cushions and ice boxes packed round my head I was taken down the Rhine and thence to England. I was laid up for many months with congestion of the brain, following upon concussion, and although I made a complete recovery, all idea of triposes was at an end.

Twenty years later I told this story, as I have now recounted it, to Mr. Arthur Balfour when he dined with me, as he did

each year when I was in the House of Commons. I was the first to leave his party on the Fiscal question, and had attacked both his education and army policies when he was Prime Minister. Nevertheless, he was good enough, and generous enough, to allow me to retain his friendship to the full, indeed, I can thankfully say, that I still retain it. On this occasion I remember that Alfred Lyttelton, Winston Churchill, and Lord Hugh Cecil were also present. Alfred Lyttelton remarked that the story was very interesting; but Mr. Balfour, turning to me with his benevolent smile, said slowly, "My dear Jack, that explains it all!" Perhaps it does!

CHAPTER II

First Military Training—Life-saving—Round the World as an A.B.—Storm in the Indian Ocean—Across New Zealand on Horseback—Further Escapes from Drowning—To Kooti, Outlaw—The Massacre of Poverty Bay—A Maori Princess—Lassoing Wild Horses.

My interest in Law and Classics did not survive this concussion, though I took my degree before leaving the University. In any event my family tradition would probably have pulled me into the army or politics; and in this instance family tradition marched amicably with natural choice.

Indeed, while at Cambridge I joined the Hampshire Yeomanry, which was commanded by Colonel the Honourable Sir Harry Crichton, K.C.B., the Adjutant being the late Lord Airlie. The Hampshire Yeomanry had a long and worthy history, but it had fallen on evil days so far as recruiting was concerned. These two keen cavalymen were determined to bring it up to strength and make it the most efficient yeomanry regiment in England. They gave their whole time to it, and were not unsuccessful. We young officers had to work hard, attending courses at Aldershot, manœuvres, staff rides, and, of course, constant drills. This was a most unusual proceeding in those days, but the enthusiasm of Colonel Crichton and Lord Airlie was irresistible. I was appointed to command the Isle of Wight Troop, and set to work at once to try and recruit up to full strength. Soon after I took my degree at Cambridge in 1890, I went to Aldershot for a month's hard training attached to the 19th Hussars. There for the first time I met John French, with whom I was to be so closely associated in after years at the War Office, and in the World War. Already he was a man of mark, with ideas and intuitions quite outside the ordinary run of men.

But just as my academic career had been interrupted by the accident in the Alps, so my military activities were delayed by another adventure. A French ship was wrecked on our coast at home, in a great storm on the 19th October, 1891, at the top of high water. The lifeboat was launched, but the tide was so high that the second big wave caught the boat before she had gathered way and hurled her back on the beach at the base of the cliff. None of the crew were drowned, but the boat was in such a position that it was impossible to launch her again until the tide receded. I did what any other swimmer would have attempted, and, my luck still holding, was successful in reaching the vessel with a line. For my share in rescuing the survivors, I received the French gold medal of honour, followed in due course by the War Office order to wear it: "When in uniform on the right breast"; but the other consequences of my adventure were not so pleasant. I suffered severely in health from the prolonged exposure, and from having a rib driven into my lung by a piece of floating wreckage, and was told that a long sea voyage was advisable. Accordingly I made a plan with Tom Conolly and Lord Burford to go round the world. Our benevolent parents fell in with this view, and we set sail for the Cape, Tasmania, New Zealand, Cape Horn, Rio, and so home. Our ship was the *Kaikoura*, belonging to the New Zealand Shipping Company, a vessel of a little under 3,000 tons, designed to sail, and steam, rigged as a barque, with great masts and spars capable of driving her in strong winds faster than she or most other vessels of that day could steam. The plan was to steam most of the way to the Cape, setting sail when possible, and then to sail along the Prevailing Course of Westerly Wind—the Roaring Forties—all the way from the Cape to Cape Horn, calling at Tasmania and New Zealand on the way. The captain was a famous seaman, Lieutenant Crutchley of the Royal Naval Reserve, who had circumnavigated the globe almost more times than he could remember. He was very proud of his ship, and handled her

in masterly fashion; he had need of all his seamanship before the voyage was over.

Tom and I having spent much of our youth in yachting and boat sailing, obtained permission from the captain to go aloft and help with the sails. Burford, who was afraid of nothing else, never got over the dizziness which comes to some people at considerable heights. Amongst the passengers was an amiable gentleman of considerable wealth, who was taking the voyage for his health. When nearing Cape Town, in order to amuse us two lads, he betted us £25 to £5 each that we would not act as able seamen for the rest of the voyage. The captain and the chief officer readily agreed and the bet was taken. Although neither of us had much ready cash to spare, I doubt if we would have taken on the job for twenty times the money if we had known the extremity of the hardship involved. We were allotted our watch and our stations aloft, and were treated in every way as ordinary members of the crew; being allowed, however, to retain our cabins and have our meals in the saloon so long as our duties as A.B.'s were not interfered with.

We anchored in Table Bay after a prosperous voyage. Never shall I forget the thrill of the first view of Table Mountain in the morning light. Cape Town seemed to me to be almost the most beautiful and romantic place on the world's surface. I was to see it again nine years later, during the period of the South African War, and much of my political life was to be bound up with South Africa.

From the Cape to Tasmania the Great Circle, that is to say the shortest distance between the two points, lies deep in the Arctic Circle, where no ship can penetrate. But although the shortest route is barred the further south one can go the less the distance to be travelled; moreover, the great westerly winds that roar round the South Seas tend to be stronger the further south one goes. Captain Crutchley decided to take the most southerly course, and very soon we found ourselves bowling

along with all plain sail set before a forty knot wind. We were constantly making and shortening sail according as the wind moderated or increased, and we made regularly from ten to thirteen knots. Steam was kept up and the propeller revolving to avoid the drag; but for days on end we had what is known as "negative slip," that is to say, we were out-running the propeller. We sighted one or two steamers, and passed them easily, as the high rollers of which our sailing ship made nothing, were a great bother to them. As we got further east and south the wind increased to a strong gale, and about ten days out from Cape Town we ran into a big storm. It was a famous gale, well described by Lubbock in his account of the Australian Wool Clippers of that day. Many ships were lost in the South Indian Ocean, and none escaped without some damage. I remember one day Captain Crutchley and the chief officer tried to estimate the height of the waves. We recollected that Sir Charles Ross, in one of his Arctic voyages, estimated that the great waves were not more than thirty-six feet high. Certainly these were much higher. From the deck and from aloft various methods were tried to ascertain their true height; the lowest estimate was fifty-six feet, the highest seventy feet. Such great mountains of water were an awe-inspiring sight, towering higher and higher astern—apparently the height of the top gallant yards. It appeared certain that each one must break on the ship and send her to the bottom; yet, all except one, passed under her taffrail as she lifted to the oncoming sea. One night, at the height of the storm, having helped in further shortening sail I went down to my little deck cabin and slept in my clothes. I woke to find myself under water with my head up against the cabin roof. In another moment I found myself swept out of the cabin and floating on the sea with the ship sliding along below me. I managed to clutch the port after-rigging with both hands, and in a few seconds, which seemed like an hour, most of the water drained away and I jumped down on to the deck. I heard the boatswain's whistle

and shouts of "All hands aloft," as I ran forward. A great wave had broken on our poop, and almost immediately after this disaster the wind had veered suddenly to the north north-west; we were lying over at an angle of about forty degrees, with some of our sails aback, but still forging ahead at a great speed.

I climbed up the ratlines on the weather side for about twenty feet; then the violence of the wind was such that it blew me against the rigging so hard that I could not push myself away to take a further step. The sailor just below bawled out to me to get on. When I said: "I can't," with his knife he pricked the calf of my leg, which angered me so much as to give me sufficient strength to push my body away from the rigging and continue the upward climb. He was a splendid fellow, this seaman, and a great friend; my place on the yard was next to his, and I am sure I should have fallen often if it had not been for his help. I reached the top gallant yard all right and started to climb along it, as I had so often done before; but it was much more difficult than I had ever known it, because of the angle at which we lay. However, I got to my place and we set to work to try and stow sail. Truth compels me to relate that although our wealthy friend paid the bet I certainly did not earn it that night—I just fixed my legs between the yard and the foot rope and held tight on to the jackstay. I did hand my neighbour a gasket or two, but beyond that I am afraid I was of no use. The wind was terrific, no doubt over eighty miles an hour. The darkness was intense, there were scurries of snow and sleet, and being wet through, I was shivering with cold.

The only head-sail we were carrying was a small fore-gallant staysail, in which the skipper was a great believer in rough weather, as it helped in steering the ship in a heavy following sea. While we were aloft this sail started to flap with a noise like thunder, and all at once was blown clean out of the bolt ropes. I see it now like a white ghost floating away

over the sea. The release from pressure caused the mast to whip in an extraordinary way, and my friend Tom was shaken off the yard. He had a truly miraculous escape. He was well out over the sea at a height of one hundred and twenty feet, without any possible chance of rescue if he fell in; no ship could round-to in such a sea and hope to live. But when he had already fallen some fifteen or twenty feet he clutched a swinging rope. If it had been a taut rope of any kind of course he could not have held on at the speed he was falling. But it so happened that it was a buntline, which gradually eased up as he held on. Finally he was left suspended at the end of about forty feet of rope. As the ship rolled he caught the ratlines on the starboard side and held on.

We stowed sail—or rather the others stowed sail—and climbed down. The first streak of dawn was beginning to show as I made my way to the captain's cabin. The pumps had been set going, and although we had shipped a great deal of water, there was no immediate danger. The captain produced a bottle of gin and served out a tot to the chief officer, who had come to report to him, to Burford, Tom and myself. In handing back the bottle I lost the cork and started to rummage on the floor for it. "What is the matter with you, my boy?" said the captain, "I am looking for the cork, sir," I replied. He roared out, "To hell with your corks, what does a man want with a cork on a night like this?" He was an abstemious man, but the occasion was no ordinary one.

When it was light we went round the ship. The sea which had pooped us, and which had incidentally floated me out of my cabin, had done a great deal of damage. At the after end of the ship there was a poop deck, about six feet above the main deck, which had accommodation for about twenty men, and was supported by four rows of iron standards, about as thick as one's wrist. This deck had been smashed absolutely flat down on to the deck below, the iron standards being twisted into corkscrews and other fantastic shapes. Some had forced

their way through the poop deck, and others were coiled up between the two. We had shipped a great deal of water, and although the pumps got the better of it during the day, the situation was still of some danger. To make matters worse, quantities of ice appeared ahead on our port beam to the north of us. Lubbock describes how in this year the icebergs of the southern seas were found far to the north of their usual limit. The captain's only comment when we surveyed these awe-inspiring flat-topped bergs was, "What a lucky thing I took a southerly course! We shall leave all the worst of the ice on our port hand." So indeed it proved. As the afternoon wore on it cleared up, and from the crow's nest we could see about twenty miles in all directions. To our left was a continuous row of icebergs, the loom of more ice could be discerned to our right, but ahead of us lay a great lane with not a berg in sight. The wind backed again to the west and, though a whole gale was still blowing, the sea moderated somewhat. We had no more misadventures, and after touching at Hobart, arrived in due course at Wellington, in New Zealand.

Our plan here was to ride right through North Island, from south to north. We arranged to take with us an Englishman named Park, who had been in the telegraph service, and a half-caste guide with a musical Maori name, which we abbreviated into Robert; an exceptionally fine rider and athlete, a powerful swimmer, with an iron constitution and muscles of steel.

The five of us started for Wanganui, each riding one horse and leading another as pack horse. Our way lay through recently cleared sheep land, carrying twelve sheep to the acre, alternating with sandy scrub. The horses went well and we were the happiest people alive. From Wanganui we turned north and joined what was then known as Field's Track, which leads to Lake Taupo, in the centre of North Island.

On the second evening I had one of the narrowest escapes from death that has befallen me in peace time. There had been exceptionally heavy rain in the mountains which we were

approaching, and, in order to reach the place where we proposed to make our camp, we had to cross the Mangawhero River. A mile before we reached the river we could hear the thundering roar of the torrent rushing down. Park said we should not get across for a week. Robert said he reckoned we could cross that evening, but, if we did not, we should have to wait for many days. In another quarter of an hour we were at the ford. The river was bank high—a swift yellow flood—to our left upstream there were low banks, and shallow water on both sides of the river; to our right it entered a gorge with high, steep rocky cliffs and little trees, like willows, growing out of the crevices, their feathery branches just touching the water. A hundred yards further down stream the gorge narrowed and there were rapids and waterfalls creating the deafening roar which we had heard a mile away. Robert addressed us and said, “I have crossed this river very many times. With horses that can swim as ours can it is quite safe. I go first, you all follow me.” Without waiting for an answer he rode down the bank to the river, leading his pack-horse, and rode two hundred yards upstream on the sandy bottom in not more than from two to three feet of water. Then he turned his horse right handed, rode him in, threw himself off the saddle as the horse started to swim, directing him by splashing his head on one side or the other in the approved cavalry drill book style, and safely reached the other side, about 150 yards down stream. Tom and Burford followed, and all got safely over before I started to cross.

The horse I was riding was a four-year-old, which had never swum a river before without a boat to tow him. When he found himself in deep water with the ground slipping under his feet, and the current dragging him down he went quite mad, turned round and round, jumped in the air and finally, with a great splash, fell flat on his back with me underneath him. When we turned the right way up again we were in mid-stream and already almost abreast of the opposite side of the ford. I

managed to get my right foot clear of the stirrup, in which it was jammed, let go of the horse and started to swim for my life to the other side. I was a strong swimmer in those days, and knew enough about it to swim straight across the current instead of trying to get up stream. I could hear the others shouting and saw them doing something with long ropes; I only knew that I was swimming straight for a wall of rock with the ever-growing roar of the rapids on my right. Fifty yards above where the river narrowed a willow tree, quite near the water, had a thin branch hanging out well into the stream; I thought I might just reach it. Never had I swum so hard before. At the moment when I was almost exhausted I managed to clutch the very end of this little leafy bough. Where I caught it, it was as thin as a knitting needle; but I rapidly drew it to me and, so to speak, climbed along it just faster than the current was sweeping me down until finally I had to take a strain when the bough was about as thick as my little finger. How well I remember the straining of that bough and my body swirling down stream and in towards the rocky face! The bough cracked, but it held, and there I lay on my back in a twelve-knot current, with thirty feet of vertical rock above me. I heard shouts and there stood Tom and Robert on the top of the rocky cliff lowering a rope to me. Oh, the moment when I clutched that rope and knew that I was safe. They towed me upstream until we reached the ford and hauled me ashore very exhausted, but none the worse. I sat down a little dazed, observed my pack-horse grazing near by and wondered what had become of my riding horse. The astonishing Robert was already in the saddle riding upstream. He again swam across the river, left his horse on the opposite side, and ran up the rocky cliff overlooking the river on the side which I had left, where my horse was standing, trembling with fright, up to his girths in water and close up against the rock. With extraordinary ease Robert lassoed him and drew him upstream to the ford, remounted his horse

and led mine upstream and across as he had done originally. Robert was almost a 'superman'. The only people to compare with him for that kind of business that I have ever seen are the Basutos, who live in the upper reaches of the Caledon River.

We rode on about ten miles through quite uninhabited country, up the valley of a small tributary of the Mangawhero, and camped, on a grassy flat, where many years before there had been a Maori settlement. We made a blazing fire, and as both the clothes we were wearing and those on the packhorse were equally wet—there was nothing for it but to dry our clothes in the blaze, and run races without even a shirt, in the moonlight until we were warm. By that time Robert had made us some tinned soup, which we consumed—also some whisky, then we rolled ourselves in blankets—still wet, and slept soundly and well. We carried some corn with us, and this we gave our horses overnight, pegging them down on a long rope, so that they could eat grass.

On a bright sunny morning we continued our trek, and soon found ourselves in the primeval forest, travelling along a narrow track, which, in early autumn, is of surpassing beauty. The luxuriant foliage of the great trees, the ferns, the undergrowth, and above all the red Rata tree, form a picture impossible to describe. No noise reaches this deep recess, there is a dense silence, broken only from time to time by the Bell-bird's beautiful clear notes—more beautiful than any bell—in three cadences, first, two major thirds in a descending scale, then a minor third, all three in quick succession.

After two days in the forest we emerged into the open country, with the towering bulk of Tongariro in fierce eruption to the west of us. We were bound for the shores of Lake Taupo, and thence we hoped to get into King country, with the aid of a letter given us by Sir George Grey, a much-beloved friend of the Maori race.

During all our many days journey we had not met a human being, nor seen a sign of human life. When we were about

twenty miles from our destination, Tokaanu, I was riding ahead of the others, with Robert some half a mile beyond me; all at once I saw him turn about, ride back towards me and descend into a gully, beckoning me to join him. When I reached him, this fearless man had a face distorted with panic; for a time he could only mutter "Te Kooti." Then he explained that only half a mile away he had seen the famous outlaw, with a retinue of a hundred followers, and that no Maori dared to meet him. I said that there were ten of us and that Te Kooti, having been pardoned by Queen Victoria, was most unlikely to molest anybody. Robert realised the logical truth of this, but could not get rid of his unreasoning fear. I rode back and told the others. Park laughed at his fear; obviously there was no danger, and we all rode forward together. Coming toward us was this redoubtable man. He was old then, with a wrinkled face, and grizzled hair; he wore a blanket tied round his neck and falling over his shoulders; otherwise he was quite naked, except for one spur on his bare right foot. I am bound to say that even if I had never heard of him and his extraordinary exploits in defying British power, I should still have trembled at his ferocious aspect. Park went forward and spoke some words to him in Maori, to which Te Kooti replied. He wanted to know where we were going and what we were up to. Park told him we were very great English noblemen, with a letter from Queen Victoria. He also wanted to know what business it was of Te Kooti to ask us what we were doing. Te Kooti appeared very angry at this: then all at once he burst out laughing and held out his hand. I still wonder whether I did right; I have only twice refused to shake hands with a man, and Te Kooti was one of the two. On the other hand I have shaken hands with a man just before his execution for murder. But in this case, the remembrance of the massacre of Poverty Bay was too much for me and I turned aside. Three weeks later I met a man in the club at Napier, on the east coast of New Zealand, who had taken part in the fighting against Te

Kooti, and was present at his trial. He gave me the following account, which I have not seen recorded elsewhere, and as his memory now is almost faded, it may interest a younger generation to learn of his famous prophecy and its fulfilment. Te Kooti, who was a petty chief of humble origin, refused to accept English authority, even when the other chieftains had agreed; and after some desperate fighting was at last captured and tried. He claimed to be innocent of the charge of rebellion, but was found guilty and sentenced to transportation to a remote island in the Pacific. After sentence, Te Kooti spoke in a loud thundering voice, and as the interpreter translated his awful words everyone in court shivered. This is what he said: "I have said I am innocent, but you have decided to send me across the sea. I am going to make an oath on my greenstone *méré*. Have you not a sacred book on which you English swear?" A Bible was brought to him, and laying one hand on it and the other on his greenstone club he continued, "I am innocent, but you send me across the sea. I swear on my *méré* and on your sacred book that however far you send me I shall return to my native land, and, in just vengeance for the wrong you have done to me and my comrades, at the place where I land I will kill, with my *méré*, every man, woman and child until justice is satisfied." How he swam out to the ship sent to guard him on his lonely island; how he climbed up the cable and with a few followers clubbed to death most of the members of the crew; how he compelled the survivors to navigate him to Poverty Bay and drive the vessel ashore; how he then swam ashore and clubbed to death every man, woman and child in the little settlement, and then escaped to the mountains, is a grim but epic story. After months of fruitless warfare he still remained uncaptured, and in the end, received a free pardon from Queen Victoria. It was, assuredly, a strange case of an apparently utterly impossible prophecy being literally fulfilled.

Soon after this episode we crossed a ridge and below us,

stretching as far as the eye could see, was the great Lake Taupo, glittering like a sheet of pure gold in the sun. As we rode down the ten miles which separated us from the lake we passed many hot springs and one or two little geysers. The Maoris of this neighbourhood, near Tokaanu, find these little volcanic eruptions very convenient, as they are enabled to cook all their food in little pot holes of boiling water. But the country has its drawbacks. A year before we were there an Englishman, of well known family, walking about on a dark night, fell into one of these boiling holes and was almost instantly scalded to death.

Our plan was to strike west from here into a country still unsurveyed and unexplored. The Maoris of the region we intended to visit were quite friendly, but had hitherto successfully objected to any white man passing. On our journey we had met a small surveying party who had been turned back politely, but firmly. We thought that the letter which Burford had received from Sir George Grey might secure us a free passage. Also, I had a letter from Mr. Bowen, the Senator, conveying a message from the Maori representative in Parliament. Moreover, Burford was a godson of Queen Victoria, and she had sent him a very kind message wishing him *bon voyage*. Park accordingly arranged for a party of the petty chiefs to have dinner with us at the inn, and about a dozen of them turned up. They listened in respectful silence to the message from Sir George Grey and the Maori representative, but at the mention of Queen Victoria they burst into loud guttural applause.

One of the party had on a pair of trousers, another a valuable Kiwi mat, but the rest were in blankets, worn like an Italian officer's cloak. They ate a large meal, and the innkeeper allowed them about a tablespoonful of whisky each, but no more. The old chief who sat next to me was a man of about seventy years of age. The Maoris had quite given up cannibalism, but it had been practised in his life time. He opened up

the subject to me through the interpreter, and amused me by the emphatic way in which he denied that any Maori had ever eaten human flesh for any purpose of greed! It was, he said, purely a sacred rite in order to show complete victory over a fallen enemy. I have been told that what he said is quite true, at any rate I am sure that it was so in his case.

At the close of the banquet we all drank Queen Victoria's health, the assembling company bowing, after which they facilitated our journey into the unknown land.

The next morning we commended our horses to the care of the innkeeper, and started off in canoes to the south-west of the lake. There we landed and met the last white man we were to see for some time, a Belgian missionary, who was engaged in educating the children and providing medicine for their parents. He told us that Maori children were much quicker than English children during the early stages of learning; indeed, that they learn to read and write in less than half the time; but that then they come to a full stop and either cannot or will not learn any more. We saw some of his flock, delicious little children, some very dark, but others as fair as south Italians.

We continued our journey on foot up a rocky pathway through dense forest, up the valley of a stream, and after two days' trek, arrived at our first destination. The principal chief had been told we were coming, but we arrived late at night, and so tired that we waited until the morning to pay our respects.

I slept later than the others, and by the time I woke they had breakfasted and gone off with Park to explore. I told Robert that I wanted a swim, which he said could easily be arranged. We walked up the bank of a stream of hot water, with waterfalls and deep blue pools, lined with what looked like mother-of-pearl; soon we came to a big pool, with an overhanging rock, and an ideal temperature. Robert went back to prepare my breakfast and I was left alone for my swim. I took off my clothes and dived into the blue water sparkling in the

sun. As I swam back to the bank I thought I heard a rustling in the little Teashrub bushes on the further bank, but supposed it was a Kiwi—the pretty little New Zealand wingless bird. As I stood poised on the rock with my hands above my head ready for the next dive into the glorious pool I distinctly heard sounds of silvery laughter; I dived in, swam as fast as I could to the opposite bank, and ran up the sandy slope; with little screams of pretended fright, there fled from the bushes half a dozen little girls, followed by one much taller. Taken with the fun of the thing, I ran after and started to overhaul them; then the tall girl, who was shepherding them, suddenly turned about and, standing very erect, with head held high, lifted a warning right arm and forefinger. It was the most beautiful thing—animate or inanimate—that I had ever seen, like the most perfect Greek statue, with the poise of Raphael's young St. John the Baptist, at Florence. So we stood, facing each other. She had been swimming too, for beads of water shone in the sunlight like diamonds in her hair, and on her body, then she stamped her little foot, I bowed and obediently walked away, wondering greatly how so marvellous a creature could be found in this distant land. I could not resist turning my head to have a last look at my new found goddess; as I looked she turned and gave me an indescribable smile, a toss of her head and a wave of her hand.

After another swim, I dressed and walked down to our camp, where Robert was waiting with breakfast. Park had returned, but the others were still exploring and bathing in the little river. I thought it best to go at once to call on the Chief, armed with Sir George Grey's letter. The village consisted of some dozen huts, rather like beehives raised on wooden legs. To one of these, much bigger than the others, with a very much larger doorway we went. As we approached the entrance out stepped the chief, a splendid young man of about twenty years, extraordinarily handsome, with no tattoo marks, and quite light skinned. His grandfather had been one of the leading men

who signed the Treaty of Waitangi, and he and his descendants were held in high esteem, not only by the Maoris, but by the English too. His grandfather must have been a lesser edition of General Botha in South Africa—the last into the war, but the last out, the maker of an honourable peace, who saw that it was honourably kept. The young chief had succeeded about four years before, and although he could not speak English, he had once been down to Roto Rua, and had met the Governor General. He told me he was the only man of his tribe who had ever seen a white man. There were no horses in his part of the country, but he himself was a good rider and had horses further down stream. After a most interesting conversation he said he would like to introduce me to his only sister, he called out her name and in she came, completely covered in priceless Kiwi cloaks. I made a low bow and went up to shake hands with her. Of course she was my beautiful friend of two hours before. Her demure little bow, her total lack of apparent recognition filled me with admiration. Through the interpreter she said that she was glad to see me, as the English and her brother were always good friends; that I was the first she had seen. After some further conversation and a promise from the chief to give us every assistance during our visit I turned to go. After shaking hands with the chief, I said good-bye to his sister; she did not understand shaking hands, but I took her hand and kissed it, and as she turned her head away I saw again that delicious enigmatic smile.

The rest of the story is soon told. As we wandered about the great forest finding strange birds, hot springs and occasionally the track of a wild boar I was often with the princess—as she was called. She started to teach me Maori, including many kind and friendly words in that singularly melodious language. I can still say in Maori that “my soul is filled with respectful adoration.” It was all very delicious and innocent, but difficult to see how it could end. She gave up the Kiwi mats, and was dressed in ever-changing costumes of garlands of

flowers and leaves. After a few days the chief came to see me and quite politely, but bluntly, asked me my intentions. To use the novelist's phrase, I was "torn with conflicting emotions." This girl of seventeen, though some would have described her as an untutored savage, was without doubt the most beautiful creature I had ever seen. Moreover, though she could run and jump like a gazelle, and swim like a salmon, she had the manner and bearing of a queen; thoughts and ideas of unbelievable charm and beauty. I had often heard people make speeches about cementing the Empire with friendship and the union of hearts; here was a union of hearts if ever there was one. But for Tom, we should have married and I suppose I should have become what was termed a "Pakeha Maori." Tom had only one argument and refused to give another single word of advice. He said I should break my mother's heart. As she was the most adored and adorable mother in the world it was a hard thing for me to answer. So it was decided that we should leave the next morning, and duly we went down to the river and embarked in six canoes. The others went on ahead, and I was left to say good-bye to the chief and his sister and embark in his own war canoe, manned by twelve strong natives with uplifted paddles. I shook hands warmly with the chief and then turned to say good-bye to my princess. I put my arm round her, and kissed her, no rubbing of noses in native fashion, but a kiss from one to the other. She burst into tears and so, I confess, did I as I jumped into the canoe and in a moment shot into the stream, under the deft blows of the twelve well wielded paddles. Just before we rounded a bend I looked back and saw her standing hand-in-hand with her brother. She waved farewell to me and I never saw her again.

At Taupo we met our horses again, which had been sent round the lake by the innkeeper, in charge of three natives, thence we rode to Roto Rua to see the hot springs and the remains of the Pink Terraces, which had been blown up in the great volcanic eruption a few years before. Even so, some

were left, and very beautiful they were. It was here that Tom received a letter summoning him to take up his commission in the Scots Greys, so off he went, alas, by the next coach to Napier, en route for Wellington, to join the first homeward bound ship. New Zealand was deliciously primitive in those days, there were few railways, few roads and very few bridges. But you could go almost anywhere on horseback, and wherever you went you were sure of a warm welcome from whites and Maoris alike. The hospitality of the British settlers to a stranger was unbounded. They were a deeply religious people, and at the same time full of the joy of life. The charm of the inhabitants, added to the marvellous and varied beauty of the country, made a combination unique in the world.

After a sad farewell to Tom, Burford and I set out with all the horses, Park, Robert and two natives to continue our plan to hunt wild horses on the great Taupo Plain. We rode south, across country to a place then called Opepe. There were no houses, but a stretch of beautiful grass with clear running water. It had been the scene, many years before, of the Opepe Massacre. When the country was first explored a troop of mounted police had camped there. During the night the Maoris fell upon them and killed them all. Their mares and stallions escaped into the Taupo Plain, and in the course of years, multiplied exceedingly; they roamed about in mobs of from ten to twenty, always with one lord of the herd, a fine upstanding stallion. Their habits were much those of the Scottish Red Deer.

The morning after we arrived the head man of the nearest tribe of Maoris came to our camp and offered to give us every assistance: we promised to give him half of all we caught, which delighted him. He came out with us to show us where to find the best mobs. It was the most exciting hunting imaginable. We divided into two parties and set out to ride across the plain; the ground was sandy and rocky, with little bushes of Tea Tree, as the natives call them, on which the horses

thrive. The country was intersected with dry nullahs, varying in depth from ten to a hundred feet. We had diligently practised throwing a lasso, which we carried on the saddle, but, of course, we were no good at it, as it takes years to acquire the difficult art. This meant, as events proved, that Burford and I could not catch our quarry until we had ridden him to a standstill; but we both had two fine thoroughbreds, with a certain amount of corn inside them, so that the odds were about even as between hunter and hunted.

I well remember that first day. After we had ridden for about three-quarters of an hour we saw nine horses in a hollow about a mile away. We got down wind of them, and taking advantage of the folds in the ground, managed to get within about a hundred yards of them before they saw us. There were seven mares, a little bay stallion, and a magnificent jet black stallion in charge of the party; when he saw us he turned and galloped away with the rest, but having got them well started, he turned about on his hind legs, snorted, pawed the ground, and let us get within thirty yards of him before he moved off to rejoin his wives and little brother. How they galloped! Mine was a fast horse, but the wild horses seemed to go two yards to my one. It was perfectly flat going, except for occasional tiny nullahs, quite easy to jump! For about four miles we went as fast as ever I have been on a horse. By this time I was overhauling the mares, and in spite of the efforts of the stallion to drive them forward I rode right into the middle of them. The stallion came up to me—I see now his blazing eyes, his black mane waving in the wind, as he reared up and struck at my horse with his forefeet. I threw my lasso, but of course missed him. I think he must have got my wind, for he turned about and went off at redoubled speed. I followed, and for an hour raced after him, generally about a hundred yards behind. All at once he disappeared from view as if the earth had swallowed him up. In another moment I found myself on the edge of a nullah perhaps twenty feet broad and

forty feet deep, with an almost precipitous side. The stallion had galloped down a little track not six inches broad, going down at an angle of forty-five degrees. While I was wondering whether my horse, who was tired, could negotiate this descent, I looked up and saw, not half a mile away, the faithful Robert galloping towards me. We had not gone quite straight, so that he had managed to cut off a corner and had nearly caught us up. In a couple of minutes he had reached us, I was off my horse, giving him a rest, when without a moment's hesitation Robert drove his spurs into his horse, whispered to me to follow, and rode down this perilous path. He got half-way down, when the path broke away, and he and the horse rolled over together to the bottom. I managed to lead my horse down, and found Robert rubbing his head, but still holding his horse, neither of them any the worse. He then looked hard at the dry bed of the nullah and spotted the hoof marks of our stallion; so we mounted and rode along as silently as we could. Robert whispered to me that the stallion would be resting somewhere. Sure enough, when we came round a bend we saw him, still with heaving flanks, cropping grass near a big jutting-out rock. We jumped off, threw our horses' bridles over their heads, took my lasso from the saddle and started to crawl forward on hands and knees over the thirty yards which separated us from him. Robert had the lasso and we crept forward on our stomachs to within five yards. The wind was strong from him to us, and he had his back to us. My left foot touched a stone, and in an instant the stallion's head was up; almost before he moved, Robert was on his feet and with amazing skill threw the lasso right over its head. The wind was strong and Robert was exhausted with galloping and crawling, yet the circle fell over the horse's head as perfectly as if he had gone forward and placed it there. Then followed a most terrific struggle, the horse leaped into the air like a salmon, tugged and pulled, going through the most extraordinary contortions, and dragged us about all over the bottom of the nullah. Finally, he began

to tire and at last threw himself on the ground and lay still. Robert sent me back to fetch the horses, and after many attempts we managed to get the stallion going, Robert leading him with me following behind. We found a better way up the nullah, and after two hours of very hard work we arrived back at the camp. Park and the natives had made an extemporary loose box of very strong timber, into which the united efforts of five people with five ropes induced the stallion to go. He really was a splendid beast, and the Maori head man, who had returned to camp, said he was the best he had ever seen. The rest of the story is not so satisfactory. The poor beast refused to eat or drink, nor did he cease to tremble. Robert had an exceptional knowledge of horses, especially this kind, but confessed himself completely baffled. At the end of twenty-four hours it was plain to us all that unless we released him he would die. We took away the heavy sliding bars and he bounded out, then fell, but recovered himself and cantered slowly down the grass, while we stood still and watched. At the stream he stopped and drank, then lay down and had one roll. "He will live all right," said Robert. Sure enough he got up and galloped away; we saw him through glasses still galloping freely, three miles away.

We stayed at Opepe three more days, rested the horses the second day and hunted again on the third. Burford caught a young stallion and a good-looking mare, both of which soon became more or less reconciled to captivity. We gave the mare to the Maoris, took the young stallion along with us and rode by easy stages to Napier and civilisation.

There Burford got a letter from Sir George Grey, asking him to go and see him, also another from his father, the Duke of St. Albans, wanting him to return home an account of family illness. By leaving at once he could just catch a homeward-bound steamer; so off he went, leaving me to dispose of the horses and continue my journey alone. This was a real blow, but the people at Napier were more than kind, bought

all the horses at a good price, put me up at the club, and then took me out to a famous sheep farm to see the way in which an elaborate farm should be run.

From New Zealand I crossed to Australia, where I shot many duck and made many friends, returning to England completely restored to health, in time for my yeomanry training.

CHAPTER III

Return to England—Enrolled as Lifeboatman—A Night Alarm—Pneumonia—Egypt—Marriage and Call to the Bar—Theories of Warfare—Dinner at Osborne.

ON the advice of Sir Richard Webster, then Attorney-General, I went to the office of Field Roscoe, solicitors in Lincoln's Inn Fields, to learn conveyancing. It was indescribably dull, but it taught me a great deal. Moreover, Blackburn taught me to play chess at Simpson's Divan, where I often lunched. He was the most famous living chess player of that time, thinking nothing of playing several games simultaneously, blindfolded.

In the autumn of 1893, when I was at home in the Isle of Wight, a small steamer, the *Ossian*, came ashore in thick weather and a heavy ground sea. We launched the lifeboat and rescued the crew, I taking an oar in the boat in place of a man who was ill. Our coxswain, a famous old lifeboatman, Benjamin Jacobs, thereupon proposed me as a permanent member of the Brooke Lifeboat crew. I was duly enrolled, and remain a member to this day. I can truly say that of all the posts that have been given to me, this fills me with the greatest joy. Although I have had too little to do with it, owing to frequent absence, I can but record that since she was established our boat has saved 263 lives.

I have so often been asked what a lifeboat launch on service in a storm is really like, that I will try to describe such an episode from my own experience.

One midwinter's evening, on the south coast of the Isle of Wight, the wind came on to blow hard from the south south-west at about five o'clock, and the sea ran exceptionally high.

It was high water at about eleven that night, and our experience is that the wind tends to moderate as the tide goes down. This time it did not happen that way. When I went to bed, about twelve o'clock, it was blowing harder than ever, shaking the whole house. I took the precaution to put out my thick clothes, and went to sleep. At half-past two I was woken by a very loud bang—the maroon which is fired to summon the crew. I jumped up, dressed as fast as I could and started to run down towards the beach, just half a mile away. When I got round the corner of the house I was blown right over and, indeed, it was with difficulty that I managed to make my way into the comparative shelter of the trees at the bottom of the garden. As soon as I got into the little village street I started to run again. It was almost dark, but one could just see. On reaching the Rectory, which is overshadowed by big ilex trees, it was pitch dark, and I ran bump into something woolly and warm. It was one of the ten horses which we require to pull our lifeboat on its carriage down to the beach. I followed the horses to the lifeboat house, and there found most of the crew assembled; the rest turned up within ten minutes.

Quite apart from the howling of the wind, the sea was making so loud a roar that one had to shout into one's neighbour's ear to make him hear. The curious thing was that while we stood in the lee of the lifeboat house talking, nobody said what an awful night it was, or expressed doubts as to our fate, though I know full well that it was in the mind of everyone of us. A few technical remarks, about the last of the ebb helping us towards the wreck if we wasted no time in launching, were all that were said.

We could not see the wreck, but we could see her starboard light showing green at intervals. She was stuck fast on the outer ledge, about a mile and a half from where we launched.

The horses pulled the boat on its carriage down to the beach, and turned her round. The wind blew so hard up the lifeboat road that it was almost impossible to stand, but we man-

aged to get the carriage down to the water's edge. Then came three problems, easy of solution in ordinary weather, but all terribly difficult in a great storm. The first, to get the carriage far enough into the water so that when the boat was launched from it she would have water enough to float. The second, after we had pushed the carriage far enough into the sea, to clamber into the boat in clothes sodden, from head to foot. The third problem, when the boat had been launched to pull hard enough to surmount the first wave. We got her in up to the axles of the wheels, but in the process waves went clean over our heads; still we did all manage to climb in. Then we got our oars out and waited for the coxswain to shout "Launch" to the helpers on the shore. There are two long ropes attached to each side of the stern of the lifeboat, passed through pulleys in the fore part of the carriage and then brought back to the shore; the helpers catch hold of these and on the word "Launch" run as hard as they can up the beach, thus shooting the lifeboat from the carriage out into the sea.

The coxswain, Ben Jacobs, was a splendid man, of immense strength and quite devoid of fear. Moreover, he had lived on the coast all his life and knew every rock and current.

So we sat in the boat with our oars ready, waiting for the best moment to launch. Then, as now, I rowed stroke on the port side. The oars are painted white to distinguish them from the starboard ones, which are painted blue. I confess that as I sat there waiting, for what seemed like an hour, I thought our chances of getting to the wreck were almost hopeless. Nor did I think it likely that all of us would get out of the adventure alive. I had lived on the coast nearly all my life, and had never seen such a storm, nor so high a sea.

At last the coxswain chose the right moment; after a great wave had nearly lifted us off the carriage, he raised his right hand above his head and roared out "Launch." There was a rumbling sound as the boat ran over the rollers on her way to the sea, and, with a crash, into the water we went. How we



BROOKE LIFE BOAT
with Author third from right

pulled, my God, how we pulled! Every man knew that it was our only chance to get enough way on the boat to surmount the next wave. Then it came. We could hear it roaring, though we dared not look round, for we had to devote our whole mind and strength to pulling. Up went the bow, up, up, until the boat was nearly perpendicular, but over the crest she went and for a moment we were safe.

It is a strange thing about the sea, but it is a fact, that when you once get on to it in a boat as low in the water as a lifeboat, you get far less wind than you do ashore. I suppose the explanation is that the wind is continually swept up by the backs of the great waves, and thus most of it passes over one's head. We got over the next wave and the next. The third one was a big fellow, which, fortunately, broke just before we reached it. Nevertheless, it drove us back to within fifty yards of the beach, but we kept on pulling, and from that time continued to make headway. It took us nearly two hours to row that mile and a half to the wreck. The wind was dead ahead, so our sails were of no use. Moreover, in the heavy breaking seas we were likely to capsize under sail.

At last, quite exhausted, we reached the wreck. She was a great big sailing ship, and her sides towered up above us. We shouted, but no one appeared, so we threw a grapnel into the rigging, which held. She was rolling fifty degrees each way, and the great seas broke right over her. We all shouted together, but could get no reply, so two of us had to go on board. It had always been arranged that those two should be Tom Hookey, the blacksmith, and myself, because we were the lightest, and supposed to be the most agile. Tom was exactly the same age as myself, and we were lifelong and intimate friends. We both jumped into the rigging as the ship rolled over towards us, and managed to get on board. Then came the really exciting adventure of getting below between the waves without being swept overboard. By great good luck we succeeded. Down below was

a strange and melancholy sight. Three lanterns were burning in the large fo'castle. There was nearly three feet of water, and floating about were coats, shirts, trousers, oilskins, caps and tobacco pouches, but not a sign of human life. We clambered out, dodged a wave and managed to get down the afterhatch. There the ship was more than half full of water, a light was still burning, but not a soul to be seen. Above the crash of the breakers we heard a loud shout from the lifeboat, and ran to the side. Tom jumped in first and I was about to follow when she swayed out about twenty yards from the side. I climbed up the rigging to escape a big wave which swept along the deck below me, then ran down again and as the boat sheered alongside, jumped. She was only about six feet below me when I jumped, on the crest of a wave, but she sank into the trough almost as fast as I fell, so that I should guess that I must have fallen quite fifteen feet before I reached her. I fell on an unfortunate man, and really hurt him quite badly. Just at that moment the grapnel parted and we were swept away to leeward. All our oars on one side had been smashed to splinters, but we got out enough spares to pull her a bit to the east. Then we threw out the drogue over the stern, hoisted a jib and flew home before the wind at a wonderful speed. What had taken us two hours to accomplish on the way out took us twenty minutes on the return. As we sailed home we bemoaned our melancholy fate in having no survivors to bring ashore, and vowed, amidst laughter, that on future occasions we would take a few with us.

What had happened was this. The vessel, having her sails blown away and her steering gear broken, and being therefore quite out of control, had sent up signals of distress to a passing steamer, when about five miles from the shore. The steamer could not come alongside in that tremendous sea, so the crew all jumped for it. A few were saved, but, alas, most of them were drowned, and some of their bodies drifted ashore afterwards. As it turned out, had they stuck to their ship probably

all of them would have been saved.

We made a wonderful landing on a big wave, and the boat ran well up the beach. In the morning, when daylight came, there was the great ship still standing. But soon the masts, one by one, fell over the side, then swiftly she opened up like a book, and by nine o'clock there was no trace of her to be seen, only a mass of wreckage drifting ashore, all except the great spars splintered into quite little bits.

It was a hard adventure, but except for the man on whom I fell, nobody was seriously hurt; he too, soon recovered. On the other hand, I have always thought that Tom Hookey's untimely death some years afterwards was hastened by the hardships of that terrible night.

Early in the year 1894 I caught influenza, which developed into double pneumonia and double pleurisy. My temperature was between 105 and 106 for many days, with nurses and doctors in constant attendance. Of course I very nearly died, and I remember, as many others must do, that curious moment when one lies incapable of speech or movement, but with senses peculiarly alert, hearing one nurse say, "I am afraid he has gone, a nice sort of boy, too." I recovered slowly, thanks to the care of my sister-in-law, Lady Seely, with whom I was staying when I was taken ill. Eventually I went to see Sir Andrew Clark, who was then the most famous physician. He knew my family well and, therefore, all my history. He said that I had had a rather adventurous youth, and that the extreme gravity of the inflammation of my lungs was due to the damage done on the occasion when I received the French Life-saving Medal. I knew he said this to cheer me up. He then added that it was necessary for me to give up reading for the Bar and find some hobby that would keep me in the open air. He asked me what I liked. I said "Hunting," he said, "No"; "Cricket," "No"; "Yacht Racing," "No". I laughed and said, "What then?" He replied, "Sketching in fine weather." I remember walking away from his house and then and there

making a resolve that I would never take to sketching. It was not a very happy time for me for quite a different reason; my mother had fallen desperately ill, and shortly afterwards she died. She was very gentle, beautiful and kind.

My father most generously sent me to Egypt and provided me with a sailing "Dahabiyeh," which I shared with a friend, one of the Peases of Darlington. I only relate this for the benefit of others who may read this book. The effect of life on the Nile was quite miraculous. I stepped on to the dahabiyeh a very sick man who had been told by the greatest living English doctor that he must give up all hope of an active life: within a week I was better, in a fortnight I was practically well; in three weeks I was as fit as I had ever been. Such is the astonishing effect of constant sunshine, ever changing and ever interesting scenes, complete freedom from worries, and above all from dust.

The great dam at Assuan had only just been begun, and consequently the Temple of Philæ still stood in undimmed beauty.

Two relatives of mine were in the Egyptian Army; from them I learnt much of the cruel despotism of the Mahdi at Khartoum, and the plans then maturing for his overthrow. From near Assuan I went with my cousin a two days' camel ride into the desert, carrying with us four large bags of gold, being subsidies to friendly tribes. Those who have never ridden a really good racing camel have no idea what a wonderful means of progression this is. The difference between riding one of these animals and the ordinary camel is quite as great as the difference between riding a well bred horse and trying to ride a cow. We arrived late one night at the residence of the chief Arab, for whom we had brought the money. He was a most ferocious-looking man, and when we started to make remarks and pay compliments, he replied: "Where is the money?" My cousin promptly answered that unless he was civil and gave us some dinner he would not have any money. The situation was extremely tense; we had only a small escort, while our fat

friend had some hundreds of fierce warriors close around. But the bluff was successful. He became polite at once, and ordered food to be brought: very good food too—chickens and rice in profusion—and extremely well cooked. Then we lay down to rest in the same room where we had dined, with the four bags of gold under my cousin's head. It was not until the next morning, when the Arab had given us satisfactory assurances and promises of good behaviour, that the money was paid.

While I was talking to the Arab, after everything was settled and our camels were being saddled; I showed him with pride a gold repeater watch my father had given me. He clapped his hands and said something in Arabic to a Nubian slave, who returned in a few minutes with a large tray, on which were spread quite thirty repeater watches of most elaborate design, some complete with chimes, some with popular airs, one played "God Save the Queen"; most of them had fantastic figures that danced about when the spring was touched. My cousin told me that these desert savages would pay anything for objects of this kind—pianos, which, of course, nobody could play, violoncellos, trombones—all transported into the heart of the desert on camel back.

We returned unmolested by a different route, and joined our dahabiyeh a little further downstream than where we had left it. My cousin went back to Cairo by despatch boat, while we floated leisurely down stream, shooting duck and quail on the way.

I returned to England completely restored to health in time for my annual yeomanry training. Shortly afterwards I married the daughter of my colonel—Sir Harry Crichton. It was the beginning of eighteen years of unalloyed and unbelievable happiness.

Not long after my return I was called to the Bar. I became a member of the Inner Temple and went the Midland Circuit. Lord Birkenhead, in one of his many brilliant books, has made

kindly but impolite remarks about my brief career at the Bar. I was really getting on fairly well, when the outbreak of the South African War, and my election to the House of Commons during my absence put an end to legal activities. I had quite a considerable number of briefs, but must admit that I was a little unfortunate with the first. I was attending Nottingham Assizes and had been told by the solicitor that I was to be the prosecuting counsel in a case of assault and battery; one man had hit another a hard blow in the face and nearly killed him. It was my first case, and I was told it was a simple one, and that I was sure to get a verdict. The day before I went out hunting on a fast chestnut thoroughbred belonging to my brother Frank. We found a fox near Newstead Abbey, and I had the good luck to find a hole in the wall and thus get away alone with the hounds. Such a moment is so thrilling that one may be forgiven for looking at nothing except the glorious chase. We galloped across a large grass field with a thin fence at the far end; it was only when my horse was in mid-air that I saw a strand of wire round his foreleg. The posts were on the near side of the fence, and I should have seen it, but in my excitement I had not looked. The horse turned in the air and the ground came up and hit me a terrific bang. I got up very dazed, with my face covered with blood, but as people always do on these occasions, remounted and continued the hunt. However, my brother soon caught me up and took me home. The doctor came, stitched up a cut and covered my face with plaster. Next morning I was in court with a wig which felt much too tight and a splitting headache. The case was called, and I stood up to open the attack; the judge, with a smile, said these awful words: "Is this the prosecuting counsel or the prisoner?" Of course, the court roared with laughter, as they are bound to do at all judge's jokes, and I continued my speech as best I could. The prisoner was convicted and received a light sentence. The judge afterwards came to dinner with my father and prophesied a brilliant legal career for me, but I am afraid that his compliments were

due to a combination of regret for his joke and thankfulness for a good dinner.

Shortly afterwards came my first introduction to political life. Sir Richard Webster, who was member for the Isle of Wight, had gone to America on an arbitration case. Before leaving he had told his chairman in the strictest confidence that he understood that Lord Salisbury was to appoint him Master of the Rolls, and he considered I should be a good successor as member for the constituency. Arrangements were accordingly made for him to meet the Conservative Association on his return, announce his resignation, and recommend my adoption as candidate. The matter was so confidential that I was not informed of what was impending until the very day of the meeting. My father drove me into Newport in an old-fashioned landau with a pair of horses, and on the way explained the situation to me. I protested that I did not want to stand as a Conservative, but as a Liberal Unionist. Here was a difficult moment! My father had given his promise on my behalf, never thinking that I would take so strong a view. I hear the horses now trotting along under the elms past Swainston, and my father saying: "Don't be ridiculous, there is no difference between Conservatives and Liberal Unionists." The reply: "But you are a Liberal Unionist."—"Yes, but I was a Liberal member for twenty years before the Home Rule split, and my father for twenty years before me. You are starting afresh. With the situation as it is, there is no difference now.

"But I have always been a Liberal. You probably don't know that I was the only boy who supported Milner when he stood as the Liberal candidate for Harrow in 1885, and what is more, that I was condemned to write a Georgic as a punishment for reading Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Speech aloud in the middle of form."

"But that is not quite the same thing."

"Ah, but I think it is."

We very nearly had a serious quarrel; but my father was patient, and it was ultimately agreed that I should go to a room opposite the Bugle Hotel—where the meeting was to be held—and that he would talk to the chairman and see what could be done about it. While I write this I am reminded of the great man's saying: "I have had many troubles in my life, most of which never happened." For the problem was solved in most unsuspected fashion. When my father found the chairman he showed him a telegram which ran: "Complete misunderstanding. Do nothing at meeting until I arrive by special boat." It appears that the steamer in which Sir Richard Webster had been travelling had been delayed by fog, and had only reached Southampton an hour and a half before the time of the meeting in Newport. When the pilot came on board Sir Richard received a letter explaining that his appointment as Master of the Rolls was necessarily postponed. While I sat waiting in my lonely room, composing an elaborate speech, Sir Richard Webster was addressing the delegates, explaining that he was proud to be their member, and hoped to continue to be so for some time to come! So my father and I drove back to Brooke crestfallen but the best of friends.

During the six years between my marriage and the outbreak of the South African War I spent most of my time and energy in bringing my troop of yeomanry up to strength and in various kinds of military duty. I attended the manœuvres, which were on a considerable scale, in the neighbourhood of the Meon Valley. The autumnal rains came early that year, and the whole valley was flooded, with the result that the troops suffered so much from sickness that the manœuvres had to be abandoned abruptly.

I remember several generals dining at Westbury with Colonel Le Roy-Lewis and discussing the merits of yeomanry and volunteers. They were extremely emphatic as to their uselessness, and, I thought, very foolish. Our host said politely that after all there were a good many of them. For instance, there

were over ten thousand yeomanry in formed regiments with traditions and esprit de corps. "I dare say there are," said the senior general, "but, by God, sir, if it comes to fighting I would sooner have one unit of regular cavalry than the whole of your ten thousand." The others, with one exception, applauded vigorously, and proceeded to demolish their host's best port.

The most fantastic theories then prevailed about warfare. Frontal attacks in broad daylight were the recognised method of approaching the enemy. It really did not seem to have dawned on the old-fashioned military mind that a complete revolution had been made in the whole science of war—strategically as well as tactically—not only by the invention of the quick-firing gun, but, above and beyond all, by the discovery of smokeless powder, which clearly had made more difference than all the other inventions put together. All doctrines of superiority of fire vanished when the enemy could fire on you and still remain invisible. It became possible for ten men properly concealed to withstand effectively a hundred or more. Indeed, with my own eyes I saw this happen over and over again both in the South African and in the World War.

In the former war, the tragic failures of Graspan, Magersfontein, the Modder River, and, on the Natal side, on the Tugela were striking instances of this obvious truth.

Later on, sometimes, the boot was on the other foot, and the Boers in greatly superior forces could not advance against our concealed rearguards. Of this one had practical experience almost daily. A moderately good shot can pick off walking men at two hundred yards at the rate of one or two a minute, when they get nearer, if he keeps his head, he can increase the rate. The same principle applies in striking degree to artillery: one properly concealed gun is, of course, the master of a whole battery which is visible to the concealed gunner.

I got into great trouble after the South African War for a speech I made in the House of Commons, in which I said that one of our most famous batteries had been forced to retire from

its position with loss owing to the fire of a single pom-pom served by a Johannesburg hairdresser. All kinds of old artillery men wrote me indignant and violent letters, but the statement was perfectly true and reflected not the slightest discredit on the distinguished battery concerned. Indeed, had the positions been reversed, an English gunner would have knocked out a Boer battery much more swiftly and effectively. This pom-pom was completely concealed in the rocky hill, and in the sunlight there was no trace of flash or smoke: the range was short and our battery was in full view. It would have taken ten thousand rounds to cover the whole face of the hill with fire, and long before the gunner and his gun had been shot by that method the entire visible battery with its guns, horses and men would have been destroyed. The controversy ended happily; Lord Lee of Fareham broke the spell of acrimonious dispute by taking the comically false ground that the hairdresser had been a regular gunner in the Dutch Army in days gone by! In the end we completely made up the quarrel, and the Artillery Association invited me to become a member of that body, an honour which I gratefully accepted and still enjoy.

But in the World War the astonishing effect of accurate rifle fire from concealed positions was often shown on a grand scale, especially by our own troops, whose knowledge of the rifle and its power enabled them to inflict most terrible losses on the Germans on the Western Front. I shall have something to say about this in later chapters of this book: suffice it to say now that during the retreat from Mons, again and again, thin rear-guards of our cavalry and infantry held up for hours forces ten or twenty times greater than their own, and finally, in the great German advance of March, 1918, their losses, only recently disclosed, amounting to more than a quarter of a million men, were caused in great degree by the British and Dominion riflemen and machine-gunners holding on to the last moment and firing from concealed positions at short range. How, then, can the foolish statement be made that strategy and tactics remain ever the



THE AUTHOR ON "MAHARAJAH" 1899

same? Alexander, Hannibal, Julius Cæsar, Charlemagne, the Black Prince, Cromwell, Marlborough, Condé, Napoleon, would never have acted either strategically or tactically as they did had quick-firing rifles and smokeless powder then been invented. But all these things were completely hidden from the more old-fashioned minds in the days before the South African War. There were many exceptions, and curiously enough, vision did not depend upon youth: Lord Wolseley, for whom I was galloper on more than one occasion, expounded to me, during a long train journey, the kind of argument which I have just adduced, regarding the alteration in strategical and tactical dispositions of the great soldiers of the past had they been blessed, or cursed, with smokeless powder.

Sir Ian Hamilton was more alive than any other soldier whom I met to the new conditions in modern warfare.

Lord Roberts saw clearly the astonishing destructive power of accurate rifle and artillery fire, though perhaps he did not see the overwhelming increase in the strength of the defensive as clearly as the other two. Strangely enough, a great soldier, happily still with us, who might have been thought to lean most strongly to the traditional side—the Duke of Connaught—realised both points clearly: I served on his staff throughout the manœuvres in the west country in 1898, when he was in command of one side opposed to a similar force commanded by General Buller. The complete discomfiture of the latter was due to the more modern vision of his opponent.

I spent some of my spare time during this period in making a tour of the lifeboat stations on the south coast of England with the inspector. The committee of management of the Lifeboat Institute gave their consent, and not long afterwards did me the honour to elect me one of their number. I was then, as I have always been, rather hard up; my wife and I sold our dogcart to the local doctor, and with the proceeds went off on this delightful holiday. We launched a different lifeboat every day, from the Isle of Wight to Land's End, and I

learnt more about it in those few weeks than I could otherwise have done in a whole lifetime.

One odd episode happened not at all to my credit. We had launched one of the Cornish boats for practice in rather a heavy ground sea. There was no wind, so we had to pull all the way. When we were about three miles from land, all rather hot and tired, the inspector told us to take in the oars and have a rest: he started a conversation about the possibility of war in South Africa. The splendid Cornish lifeboatmen, who have saved ever so many lives; had many relatives among the Cornish miners engaged in the South African goldfields; one of the crew produced an eloquent argument, with which we afterwards became familiar from the speeches of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Lloyd George and others, to the effect that the Boers were a fine and sturdy people, that we had no right to their country, why should we lose a single man to help a few millionaires and so on, and so forth. Somehow or other this filled me with unreasoning rage: I was near him in the boat and announced that if he said it again I would hit him. He did say it, and I hit him. Of course, he hit me much harder! We were promptly separated and continued the exercise. Fortunately my opponent was not a teetotaller, and we most effectively healed our quarrels that evening.

These were years of unbelievable happiness for me and of great prosperity in the country as a whole.

Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee was celebrated in 1897, and it so happened that as a consequence I was privileged to dine with her at Osborne. After the great ceremonies in London she returned there and drove to a number of little towns in the Isle of Wight, receiving loyal addresses, I being in command of the escort of the Hampshire Yeomanry on each occasion. At the end of these ceremonies the Queen gave a dinner-party, to which I was summoned. The Prince of Wales—afterwards King Edward—was present and sat on the Queen's right: I was next but one. The Queen inspired not only love, but awe in all

those with whom she came in contact; King Edward told me this after dinner, and said he was not an exception to the rule. As that extraordinary man was quite unafraid of anything or anybody else the fact is sufficiently remarkable to be recorded.

During dinner, which was a scene of quiet, restrained magnificence, the Queen inquired, in her wonderfully musical and penetrating voice, from the Prince what had been done with the Jubilee presents. Whenever the Queen spoke everybody else was silent, so I could not help but hear every word of the conversation. The Prince replied that he had arranged to send them to the Imperial Institute. The Queen said: "I do not agree to that being done, at any rate, not now." "Oh," said the Prince, "but all arrangements have been made." "Never mind," the Queen replied, "I do not wish it done." I could see that the Prince of Wales was greatly embarrassed, but he accepted the decision without a murmur.

I had been told by my kind friend, Byng (afterwards Lord Strafford), before dinner, on no account to miss partaking of the wonderful hock, sent to the Queen by the Emperor of Austria, which none but three crowned heads and one of the Rothschild family and their guests could ever taste; at the end of dinner a large glass of this wonderful fluid was poured out for me: but while I surveyed it and mused upon its romance and excellence Queen Victoria stood up and swept out of the room. Although she was short of stature and a very old lady, she really did sweep out with regal magnificence. Of course, we all had to follow at once, and I shall never know what the Emperor Francis Joseph's priceless hock was like!

After dinner the Prince of Wales took us out by a side door, and we sat on chairs on the flagstones and smoked. It was rather cold, and the Prince explained good-humouredly that his mother so hated the smell of smoke that this was the only place where he could safely come and smoke his cigar. He talked to me for a quarter of an hour or more: asked me about my family, the yeomanry, and what I was going to do. He gave me wise

and kind advice, and told me many interesting things. I was to see him often afterwards as a young minister, and he sometimes reminded me of that evening. The world has called him the "Peacemaker" for his efforts to maintain European peace, but I shall hope to show in another chapter that of all those who helped to heal the feud with our gallant South African enemies and make an enduring peace, King Edward's name stands amongst the very first. We then went to the drawing-room, where we were all introduced in turn to Queen Victoria. My turn came, and I made my bow. The Queen was ever so gracious: she seemed to radiate an air of majesty and sympathy: her voice was not only a command, but a caress. She thanked me for the numerous escorts which I had provided and conveyed her thanks to the men. She asked for details about the man whose horse had slipped up on the stones, and begged me to go to see him the next day, bearing her sympathy and good wishes. She reminded me of the occasion when my grandfather had brought Garibaldi to Brooke in 1865, and said, with a smile: "I was not very pleased then." She also mentioned how he had presented her with a loyal address from the inhabitants of the Isle of Wight in 1887, and said very kind words about his long years in Parliament and his and my grandmother's benevolence to the people in the south-west of the island.

CHAPTER IV

The Boer War—To South Africa with the Yeomanry—The Keeping of a Vow—Theft of Kitchener's Cooks—Winston Churchill—"Sir Leisurely Trundle"—Orderly's Heroism—A Miraculous Escape—Battle of Biddulph's Berg—Lord Roberts and the "Guerilla Bands."

So the years drew on to the South African War. In the interval, first the Battle of Athbara then the Battle of Omdurman, smashed the cruel despotism of the Mahdi, and, by the genius of Kitchener, gave us a secure hold in the Sudan and peace in Egypt. England seemed to stand at the zenith of her power. Her overwhelming superiority at sea none cared to dispute, but we were soon to have a rude awakening.

I well remember that when the troops embarked for South Africa the one fear of everyone concerned was that they might not get to the scene of war before it was over. Then came the disasters in Natal, and everything was changed. The reaction was so great that nearly everyone in authority was filled with most gloomy pessimism. I have been told by many, notably by St. Loe Strachey, with whom Mr. Balfour dined on the day following the repulse on the Tugela River, that Balfour was the one exception who remained vigilant, alert, competent and, above all, serene. Half-way through Strachey's little dinner-party a Government messenger came with an important despatch. Mr. Balfour left the room to read it. It contained most gloomy news, even more gloomy than the facts warranted. Mr. Balfour returned to the dinner-table and told the company that bad news had come from South Africa. For a few moments he expounded to them, with convincing truth, reasons which made him certain that the tide would turn, outlined measures that must be taken, and told them that though the road was

hard and difficult, he was sure that the first phase of the war would be over before a year was out.

Volunteers were called for, and, of course, my two troops from the Isle of Wight volunteered to a man. Another troop from Hampshire and one from Surrey were formed to make a complete squadron, and I was placed in command. We were moved to Christchurch Barracks for training and equipment, Colonel Woods being vigorous and resourceful in making all arrangements. We were inspected, and told we were quite fit to start. Then came the trouble that there was no ship. I decided to try to charter one from my uncle, Sir Francis Evans, who was chairman of the Union Castle Line. I went to see him, and said: "Uncle Frank, have you got a spare ship?" He said, "Yes." I replied: "Then I want it." He smiled, "Who is going to pay for it?" My reply was: "Never mind about that. If you produce a ship the War Office is bound to pay." He then and there sent off a sheaf of telegrams, ordering the *Goth* to be got ready forthwith. Then I went to the War Office, where my friendship with Lord Wolseley stood me in good stead. They said it was a most odd and irregular proceeding, but under the circumstances they would agree, and would put another squadron of yeomanry on board which would just fill up the boat. I returned to Christchurch with the good news, and much was the cheering when I announced to my little band that we should be sailing within a week.

Two days before we sailed, I received a summons to dine again at Osborne. My wife and I crossed to Cowes and found ourselves at a very small dinner-party. Indeed, there was no one except Princess Beatrice, Mr. Goschen—the First Lord of the Admiralty and Minister-in-Attendance—Sir Arthur Bigge (now Lord Stamfordham), Miss Minnie Cochrane and ourselves. It was a very different dinner-party from the one I had attended not two and a half years before, and the Queen was grave and very sad. During dinner a telegram came. It was

written out in very large letters so that the Queen, who was then somewhat shortsighted, could read it herself. She took it, and as she read I noticed that her hand trembled. It contained only a small list of casualties which would have been received with a sigh of infinite relief on any day during the four and a half years of the last war. But the Queen, whose chief trait was her overflowing sympathy with those in distress, was deeply grieved. She gave instructions for letters to be prepared for the relatives of all those who had fallen, and said, again and again: "How sad it is for them! How sad it is for them!" After dinner my wife had an audience. The Queen asked tenderly about our three children, and inquired where she would be while I was away. I do not know all that the Queen said, I only know that my wife burst into tears, and the Queen kissed and comforted her. Then I saw the Queen for a few moments. It was the same penetrating, commanding, gentle voice, but slower, softer and sadder. Again, as before, she begged me to thank my men from her for having volunteered for the war, and she wished them with all her heart success in battle and a safe return. I confess that I was deeply moved, and, as I kissed her hand, longed that I might see her again. Alas, it was not to be, for a year later, while we were still in South Africa, the great Queen passed away.

I duly sailed in the *Goth* from Southampton at the end of January, 1900; the troops on board being the first squadron of the Sussex Yeomanry, commanded by Captain Harvey, and the first squadron of the Hampshire Yeomanry, commanded by myself.

Just before we started a controversy arose as to who was in command of the troops. I was senior as Captain to Harvey, but he was twenty years older than I, and had held a regular commission. Sir Harry Crichton, on my behalf, vehemently asserted that the senior captain must command, and at last got his way. I then appointed Harvey as my adjutant, and the arrangement worked smoothly. These troubles were of constant

occurrence until Mr. Brodrick, then Secretary of State, solved the problem by giving us temporary regular commissions.

The *Goth* was a first-class ship, very different from the vessel on which we returned a year and a half later. We arrived at Cape Town ahead of time. My trumpeter, Denham, contracted fever, died, and was buried at sea. We managed to exercise the horses most days, and lost seven only out of nearly three hundred during the voyage. At Cape Town we went into camp to await orders, where I found the Duke of Marlborough with the Oxford Yeomanry and many other friends. To my huge joy Tom Conolly turned up, having got special leave from the Colonel of the Scots Greys, who knew of our close friendship.

Amongst other things, Tom and I made a vow that we would never surrender unwounded. The moment to decide came to Tom six months later, when a battalion of the Lincolns and a troop of the Scots Greys were surrounded by Delarey's commando at Nital's Nek. Tom refused to surrender, and was shot at close range. Three years afterwards Botha and Delarey dined with Sir John Dickson Poynder and myself in the House of Commons. He described the whole episode from the Boer point of view very clearly. I told him my greatest friend had been killed, and he said in broken English: "Oh, yes, I see him quite clearly. He very brave; he shot my favourite nephew at five yards."

After two days in camp we received orders to entrain for De Aar Junction. We arrived there the day of the surrender of Cronje at Paardelberg, and learned that we were to make a forced march with the 7th Dragoon Guards and several other yeomanry squadrons, a battalion of the Suffolks and the C.I.V. through Britstown to the Orange River. I was sent for to see the commander of the force, who was none other than Kitchener, whom I had last seen in Egypt five years before. He told me all his plans, and asked if I thought our horses were fit enough to do forty miles in a day. I said I thought they were, as we had had a wonderfully calm voyage and they had been exercised.

We started off the next day and marched with all speed to Britstown. It was late summer in South Africa, just before the rains, the veldt was dried up and the heat very great. The infantry suffered much, but stuck it manfully. In camp at Britstown Kitchener came round and made a minute inspection of every unit, as was his custom. An embarrassing moment came for me. While we were at De Aar my second-in-command — Major (now Colonel) Heseltine, who had surrendered his rank as Major in the Militia in order to serve with me as Lieutenant—had found two Indians sitting forlorn on the station. He discovered that they were cooks without the least idea for whom they were meant to cook, and no one had come to tell them. Heseltine promptly engaged them at a much higher salary than they had been promised, and the good health which we subsequently enjoyed was entirely due to the marvellous skill of these cooks, who stayed with us to the end. The day before the inspection, Heseltine had confided to me that, just as he was leaving De Aar, he had heard a man say that Kitchener had got no cooks, and that the two army ones who had been provided were not very good at the job; moreover, that two Indian cooks were due to arrive in a week's time. The awful doubt crossed my mind that Kitchener's cooks had arrived before their time, and that we had bagged them! After seeing the men's lines and the horses, Kitchener came to our little headquarter's camp. He surveyed David, our head cook, and his dusky comrade engaged in making a curry out of nothing. Turning to me he said: "What an odd thing that you should have two Indian cooks, I was expecting two, but knew they could not arrive for another week, so have come away without them." I agreed that it was a curious coincidence. There was silence for a time, then Kitchener congratulated me on the efficiency of my unit and walked away. In 1912, when I was Secretary of State for War, Kitchener lunched with me at the United Services Club and talked to me on every subject under the sun. As he went away he said: "You have given me

a very good lunch, but, after all, it was the least you could do after stealing my cooks in South Africa!"

Kitchener had a travelling wagon, drawn by mules or horses whichever suited best, fitted up like a caravan. He certainly was the most extraordinarily efficient commander that I have ever come across. We all admired him, and most of us feared him, but there was no need for fear if a man were doing his best. He would forgive a duffer, though not a coward; to a loafer he was merciless.

From Britstown we made a forced march to the Orange River in order to deny the passage to a force of the enemy who were moving west from Paardelberg. The 7th Dragoon Guards had come straight from the ship which brought them to Cape Town, and their horses died in great numbers. Still we were told we had achieved our object, and certainly none of the enemy crossed the river.

We left a small garrison there and returned by the route we had come; on the way the rain came, first a heavy downpour then a real tropical deluge. As the Boers used to phrase it: "The veldt was white with water." The infantry found themselves tramping through several inches of water and mud up to the tops of their boots. The C.I.V.'s who, had recently landed, were greatly exhausted. I remember riding up to a man, who could with difficulty drag one leg in front of the other, and offering to carry his rifle; as I came up I heard him muttering at each step these strange words: "Never again, they don't catch me again, freedom or no freedom." Then a few more steps, and again: "Never again, freedom or no bloody freedom." He gratefully accepted my offer to carry his rifle, then trudged forward continuing his malediction. At last I could not help asking what he meant. It appeared that he was referring to the fact that before the C.I.V.'s started they had each received the Freedom of the City of London. I hope he lived until the next war; if he did, I have not doubt he was one of the first to volunteer—freedom or no freedom, for he



KITCHENER'S LOST COOKS
with the Hampshire Yeomanry transport

tramped stolidly on till the end of the day.

We returned to Springfontein on the railway between De Aar and Blomfontein, and were then appointed to the fourth regiment of yeomanry, under the command of Colonel Blair, to form part of the Eighth Division under General Rundle, which had recently arrived from England. The other squadrons to complete the fourth regiment were the Leicesters, the Derbyshires and the Staffords.

Kitchener came to say good-bye before he returned north. He was cordial and kind to me, and never a word did he say about those Indian cooks!

We went east from the railway line. It was the end of March, and we little thought that we should not see a train again for about three months.

We met with no opposition for several days.

We were first seriously held up at Dewetsdorp. As a consequence, reinforcements were sent to us from the north, with the intention of capturing the high ridge which appeared to be strongly held by the Boers. We reconnoitred the whole front with cavalry, and a general attack of all arms was planned for the following day.

Winston Churchill shared our very frugal meal the night before the battle, and expounded to me the plan of attack, the orders for which he had brought me. We were to move round the left flank, while the main advance was to be made in the centre. I only tell this story because of the amusing thing which happened the next day. The Boers, having got wind of the very large reinforcements we had received, elected to retire during the night; so when we moved off as ordered we met with practically no opposition. Looking up to my right I saw a single horseman galloping to the top of the hill which dominated the whole ridge. He waved his hat as he reached the top, and through my telescope I perceived that it was Winston, who, quick to realise the retirement of the enemy, took all risks and rode straight to the objective. Those who had planned the

elaborate attack were furious, but, of course, it was the best thing to do, as it was no good dawdling when the enemy had gone.

The Boers retired eastwards towards Basutoland, and we followed moving north-north-east. The idea was to shepherd them into a corner and capture them in large numbers. It was a wearisome business moving rapidly from east to west and back again. The troops grumbled, and called their commander "Sir Leisurely Trundle." But it falls to be said that the whole manœuvre, which spread over many weeks, ended in complete success, that it very nearly ended the war—Botha himself told me as much afterwards—and that the main credit for the surrender of Prinsloo and a large portion of the Free State Army was due to General Rundle.

It was near Senekal that I had the first experience of being under point blank rifle fire—an experience often to be repeated in the World War, but comparatively rare in South Africa. I had received orders to reconnoitre to the right flank of our line of advance, where it was reported that there were considerable numbers of the enemy. Indeed, as we rode forward we saw more than one party of horsemen on the move about four miles away. We reconnoitred some miles to the east and later in the day, with our scouts patrolling in front of us, came upon a ridge with a ruined Kaffir kraal on the left edge. It seemed a likely place for the enemy to hold. I rode forward with my permanent orderly, Smith (now still in my service after thirty years), and another orderly, named Dyer, to a point from which I could see right round the kraal. It was unoccupied, so I rode back to the squadron, which was dismounted in a hollow, and gave orders for them to seize the ridge with three troops in extended order; the fourth troop to accompany me to the kraal, from which I could direct operations, and send reinforcements if there were serious opposition. Then I galloped towards the kraal, which was to be my "poste de commandement." Dyer rode about

twenty yards in front of me. Just as he got into the middle of the old mud walls I jumped off, gave my horse to Smith, and ran forward with my telescope, all ready to observe. I was not more than fifteen yards away when I heard a loud shout of "Hands up!" from three Boers, who were round Dyer still sitting on his horse. To his eternal honour he fired his rifle from the saddle in order to give warning; almost simultaneously three more shots rang out, and he and his horse collapsed on the ground. I stood quite still, watching a man aiming his rifle at me. It was a clear, sunny morning, and he was within twelve yards of me. I could recognise him to-day from among a hundred others. It was no good for me to run away, because I realised that I could not be missed; so I stood still waiting for the end. Then an extraordinary thing happened. The man lowered his rifle, looked me straight in the eyes, turned round and walked away. It was said to me in explanation of this curious episode that my three troops, who had already got round the flank of this small party of the enemy, had made the man realise that he must get quickly to his horse in order to escape. But I know perfectly well from the look he gave me, and from the deliberation of his movements that what really happened was this. He was sorry for a young Englishman thus surprised, and, out of sheer good nature, decided not to kill me. If he is alive to-day and reads this book, I hope he will let me know. Everything happens very swiftly with mounted men, and in a few moments one of my troops opened accurate fire on the kraal. The Boers retired, and we found Dyer, lying beside his dead horse, with a desperate wound through the body. Wonderful to relate, he is alive to-day in Hampshire, where I see him from time to time. But, alas, he has endured the frequent penalty of real point-blank fire in that his wound has never entirely healed. We discovered how the Boers had managed to occupy the kraal, after we had seen all round it only five minutes before. There was a deep, dry nullah, twenty feet deep and ten feet wide, leading right up to it from the

mountainous country three miles away.

It was a curious war of hide and seek, in which both sides employed every conceivable "ruse de guerre," and took turns to get the best of it.

Shortly after the Boers retreated from Dewetsdorp we incurred serious resistance at Biddulphs Berg. Here a strange episode befell me. On the day before what is termed the Battle of Biddulphs Berg, all the cavalry were ordered to reconnoitre the position. It so happened that my squadron was on the left as we approached this formidable-looking mountain. The wind was blowing from the north, and the horses made a great noise swishing through the long grass; consequently, I misunderstood the verbal order conveyed to me, and instead of moving to the left, dismounting and returning the long range fire under which we had come, galloped straight on. I was firmly convinced that we had been ordered to capture the position, and, indeed, with two troops and an equal number of the Derbyshire Yeomanry we got close under the Berg. It was only then, on looking round, that I found we were quite alone. However, it seemed a pity to give up the ground already won, so we jumped off our horses, sent them away to the rear, spread ourselves out in the long grass and returned the enemy's fire. I still thought the intention was to capture the hill, and that all we had to do was to stay where we were and join in the final attack. In point of fact, this had never been planned, the only object of our reconnaissance being to ascertain what part of the mountain and ridge was held, and in what strength.

We had only lost a few horses and men on our gallop forward, and were clearly in an impregnable position, being quite invisible in our khaki clothes in the long grass which exactly matched our colour. On the other hand, the Boers were against a rocky face, and whenever they moved could be clearly seen. As a consequence, during the hours that we lay there we had only about four men hit, while the enemy must have lost five times as many. When we had been in this position about an

hour and a half, I began to wonder what we could do next. All the other troops had completed their reconnaissance and retired; so we were alone, and therefore it was obvious that we could not capture the hill. It was equally clear that if we stood up to retire we should nearly all be shot, for we owed our immunity from serious casualties entirely to our invisibility. The only thing to do was to wait until night fell, and then make our way back with the wounded, of whom there were less than a dozen. The danger was that the Boers might surround us, but that was difficult for them, for we had a wonderful field of fire all round. Then a new factor arose; I saw a head or two moving about three hundred yards away. One of my subalterns, Bobbie Johnson (now Sir Robert Johnson, Deputy-Master of the Mint), stood up for a second and shouted out to me: "They have got a field-gun into position pointing this way!" By this time it was getting dusk, and standing up myself I saw the gun. I passed the word round to my men on a given signal to stand up and fire at the gunners, then to run forward ten yards and fall down in the thick grass again. While I was giving these orders—Bang! A terrific explosion, as everyone knows who has been close in front of even a small gun. Up we jumped, and saw half a dozen Boers round the gun not three hundred yards away. We poured in a couple of volleys, and I think we must have shot them all; certainly the gun was left, and they did not approach it again. Half an hour later it was nearly dark, so we gathered up the wounded and started the hardest march I have ever done, of about eight miles back to camp.

The curious part of the business was that, without my knowledge, I was at that time the candidate for the by-election in the Isle of Wight. Sir Richard Webster had been appointed Master of the Rolls in accordance with the plan which had miscarried two years before, and I had been adopted as Conservative candidate in his place. Shortly after we had got into our precarious position, close under the hill, I had run back to the next nearest squadron to ask them to come forward and join

me; but they had precise instructions to go no further, so, as I was tired of dancing about in long range but fairly accurate fire, I started to return as quickly as I could. Just as I had nearly reached my little party there was a burst of fire, and I thought it best to fall flat on my face and crawl the remaining fifty yards. The party I had just left, who were watching me, were convinced that I fell on my face a dead man, and so reported on their return. As a consequence on the morning of my election there was a strong rumour in the Isle of Wight that I had been killed. I think my large majority must have been to some extent due to this, for various reasons which anyone can guess, but the episode had its poignant side. My father-in-law had been to the War Office the night before to ascertain if there was any definite news, and had arranged to telegraph to my brother at Sandown, where my wife was to lunch during her election day tour of the constituency. By some mistake the wire was handed to her; it read: "Have no positive confirmation of Jack's death in action, but fear the worst." My sister, who was with my wife when she read this, saw her change colour and sway a little from side to side, but she did not cry out, and she continued her tour. I was elected by a majority of over a thousand, due mainly to her exertions, though I did not know that I was a member of the House of Commons till many weeks later.

Next day General Rundle made a reconnaissance in force of the Biddulphs Berg position. The second battalion of the Grenadier Guards suffered what we thought severe casualties in that war. On this occasion there was a remarkable instance of the value of invisibility. The Boers had a gun—the one we had seen the night before—concealed at the base of the east face of the mountain. It opened a fairly accurate fire, and at each shot there was a puff of white smoke. One of our batteries, and a first-class one, too, engaged the gun and smothered the place from whence the smoke came with well-directed shrapnel. But the gun continued firing merrily just



HAMPSHIRE AND DERBYSHIRE YEOMANRY
before going into action at Biddulphs berg
Author on left.

Photo taken by Major Heseltine—Second in Command, 1st Squadron, Hampshire Yeomanry

the same. It was impossible, even with our glasses at that short range, to see where the gun itself was, the puffs of smoke being clearly a blind. In fact, the gun was not located or silenced.

A few weeks afterwards we occupied the position, and I went over it with a gunner friend of mine. It had not rained, so by the wheel-marks we found the place where the real gun had been. We also found the spot from which the puffs of smoke emanated—a beautifully constructed dug-out of slabs of rock. Still remaining in it were a couple of sticks about four feet long and several balls of black powder mixed with cow-dung. We discovered the place where the fire had been, in which the man in the dug-out put the balls of powder at the moment when the gun was fired from its real position, some seventy yards away. The stone slab which covered the dug-out was completely plastered over with lead from the shrapnel bullets.

The engagement at Biddulphs Berg had the effect of not only pinning the Boers to their position, but of drawing considerable reinforcements from the north. But again one saw the profound mistake of daylight infantry attack.

Ultimately Prinsloo, with between four and five thousand men, was completely surrounded on the Basuto border and compelled to surrender. The redoubtable De Wet was with them, but by a most daring march, which I witnessed at long range, made his way out with two thousand men and escaped. Had he been intercepted, I believe the war would have ended there and then, in spite of General Botha, who all along refused to admit defeat. Even as it was, there was almost a complete detente while, as we now know, Botha was entirely reorganising his forces, and many people, including Lord Roberts, were of the opinion that the war to all intents was over. I had a strange proof of this some months later when we were wandering about with mobile columns relieving and provisioning the infantry garrisons, which we had dotted about in the various little towns. We had gone to Bethlehem with a column commanded by General Barr Campbell, consisting of four battalions of

infantry, including the second battalions of the Grenadier and Scots Guards, two batteries of artillery and four regiments of yeomanry. While we were in Bethlehem the news came that there was a strong force of Boers in the neighbourhood of the route by which we were to return to Harrismith. We also received news that two other columns were joining us shortly. After we had marched out we came upon the enemy, in position with guns. I was ordered to attack the left flank. It was plain that a little hill called "Witkop" was the key to the position, and I galloped for it as hard as possible. We were just in time, and with only a few casualties occupied it before a considerable force of the enemy had time to reach it. They retired some way, and opened a very accurate fire on the top of the hill. In the meantime, I had sent back a message informing the general that we had seized the hill, and he promptly ordered up a signal detachment from one of the infantry regiments, commanded by a sergeant.

Witkop is only a small hill, but it is on the summit of a great plateau. There was a helio on the top of the mountain called Platberg, above Harrismith, and although it was sixty miles away, this helio could be seen signalling to us. The signallers on our hill got their helio into position with extraordinary efficiency, and sent answering flashes. A bullet shattered one of the legs of the tripod, but they managed to prop it up and take in the message. I know my readers will find it difficult to believe this comical episode, but I have plenty of witnesses to prove it. It was customary then to send general news to any detachment that answered the helio. This is the message that was read out to me, as it was written down: "Lord Roberts landed at Cowes yesterday in order to see Queen Victoria. He said, 'The war is nearly over, nothing remains of the enemy but a few guerilla-bands.'" As I have said, at that moment we were exposed to severe and accurate rifle fire in our little corner of the battle; there were three British generals commanding three columns of all arms engaged in it, and we could make no head-

way. The sergeant's comment was: "Well, sir, they may call them baboons if they like, but they shoot . . . straight!"

In the end the British force retained its position in spite of well directed flank attacks on the part of the enemy, and the following morning we found the positions evacuated and resumed our march. . .

CHAPTER V

White Flag Episodes—Arrested for Disobeying Orders—Awarded D.S.O.—Enthusiasm of "John Milton"—Typhoid Epidemic—An Escape that Altered History—Lord Milner and Captain Creswell.

My military career was all but terminated very abruptly by an incident that occurred soon after.

In the previous chapter I have referred to the vow which Tom Conolly and I made in common with thousands of others that we would not surrender unwounded. The reason for this was that in the South African War there were numerous white flag episodes. This curious phase of warfare, practically unknown in the subsequent World War, was due to various causes. It was common to both sides, and each accused the other of treachery. One of the causes was the accuracy of the modern rifle, coupled with swift movement, enabling the aggressor to surround his enemy and put him in a position where he had apparently to choose between surrender or death. Another reason was the complete absence of real hatred or bitterness on either side. As a consequence many individuals and units, my own among them, made certain resolutions. The first, that no man or body of men should surrender unwounded. The second, that no man should ever part with his emergency ration of at least ten cartridges. The third, that the senior man in any party, whatever his rank, should be the first to arrive at any position, and if attacked should be the last to leave it. I had laid particular stress on all these three points, had got my officers and men to agree to them, and had impressed upon them that the last was, if possible, the most essential.

It so happened that about three days after the little battle which I have just described, I was in command of the rearguard

when a formidable attack developed. We had a great trail of ox wagons and much heavy transport, making us particularly vulnerable to attack. It was, therefore, vital that the rear-guard should hold on long enough to enable this slow moving column to get clear away. We managed to seize an admirable defensive position, with a good field of fire in every direction. The regimental commander galloped back to the little hill in the centre of the position where I was, and called to me to come down and speak to him. He told me to leave two troops in position and retire the other two to another line some three miles in rear. I saluted and returned to my hill, where I gave orders to my second-in-command to retire with two troops. With the remaining two troops I spread out sufficiently widely to occupy the position. I naturally continued to command, in accordance with our long-established rule. The position was really a little critical, for we were greatly outnumbered, and the enemy had a couple of guns making fairly good practice on our hill. Just at the moment when I was sending off a small party to occupy a little knob to our right the regimental commander again galloped up to the foot of the hill and shouted to me: "Captain Seely, I ordered you to retire with two troops, leaving two in position. Why are you still on the hill?" I shouted back that I had already sent two troops to the rear and was directing operations at this critical point. He then called out: "I order you to hand over the command to your next senior officer and to retire to the next position." Here was a dilemma! Every one of my men knew the rule, which had been observed in a dozen little fights in which the senior man had more than once been wounded. It was impossible for me to disregard the rule, the only thing was to disobey the order. I tried to explain by shouting as best I could to the regimental commander, but shells were dropping about him—one very close—while this argument was proceeding. In a lull I heard him say: "Will you obey my order and retire to the position you are to take up?" I shouted back "No," and returned to the crest of the hill to continue to direct opera-

tions. The Boers were most unenterprising, fortunately for us. We tried all the tricks that both sides knew so well, leaving our hats just showing to draw fire and firing from another position, stopping all fire until they began to advance, and then making accurate shooting. One way and another we managed to hold on by constantly extending our flanks for at least an hour, during which time I could see that the whole of our forces had crossed the spruit, and that it was impossible for any portion of them to be cut off.

My officers and men behaved with real skill and courage; by continuing to fire with a few men along a two-mile front, while the rest got away with the wounded, we managed to get clear without the loss of a single live man. It was a long time before we rejoined the column, and, when we did it took me still longer to canter the whole length on a tired pony in order to report the success of our efforts to the regimental commander. When I found him I was very tired, hungry and thirsty, but, frankly, elated at the complete success of this very minor, but to us very critical operation. I was going to tell him that we had held on for two hours and had got everyone alive away, including the wounded. In my own mind I was sure he would reply with words of cordial congratulation, thinking that just for once I had really behaved quite well. I reported to him as I had proposed. The unexpected answer came back: "You may consider yourself under arrest." I thought he was joking and said no more, but rode on a little way with him. Then I turned back to join my men and make sure that the wounded had been transferred to the ambulances. A young staff officer galloped after me and said: "You do not seem to understand; he means what he says. You are under arrest; and, by King's regulations must continue to be under arrest until a court martial, or court of inquiry, condemns or releases you." Still I could not realise the position. I laughed and answered: "Nonsense, this is really the only time in this old war that I have behaved properly." But, alas, for me the facts were as he

stated. I continued to command the rearguard until we settled into camp at dusk, but as soon as we had done so I found myself under arrest on parole, and instructed to hand over the command to Major Heseltine, the second-in-command of the squadron. Then followed strange days; I wandered about like a lost soul, belonging to no one, eating my bully beef by myself, with nothing to do except explore the country to front, rear and flanks, even that being contrary to orders. It was a grim time for me, but everyone was extraordinarily kind and saw my point of view; they thought I was right and said so, but frankly pointed out to me that I should probably lose my commission and be sent home on the technical ground of disobedience of a lawful order.

At last we returned to Harrismith, and the court of inquiry duly assembled in a little one-storied house on the outskirts of the town. General Rundle presided over the court. The evidence was given and there was no doubt about the facts. All this time I had been depressed, but most rebellious. One of the staff caught me as I was going in and implored me to eat humble pie and throw myself on the mercy of the court. I said I would do no such thing, that I could not have acted otherwise than I did, and I should do the same again every time. Consequently, when I was asked to make a statement, that is just what I said. Of course the whole thing was a storm in a teacup, but it was terribly serious for me. I shall never forget General Rundle saying to me, before asking me to leave the room to consider the decision: "I have one question to ask you, which I beg you to answer 'yes' or 'no.' This is the question: Setting aside all other circumstances, by the strict letter of the regulations which have been read to you, did you or did you not commit an offence against these regulations?" Of course I answered at once, "Yes, I did." I was going on to say, "but . . .", but before I could say another word he said: "Leave the room." I sat alone for ten awful minutes before I was summoned back. General Rundle said: "The court has carefully considered all

the circumstances of the case. They accept your admission that you have committed an offence, and have decided that you shall be reprimanded, but that you shall be replaced in command of your unit, and, I may add, that they congratulate you, apart from the offence which you have committed, upon the efficient manner in which you directed the defence. You are now released and will return to your unit." I was quite dazed, but managed to salute, get away, jump on my pony and canter back to our camp. I suppose what the decision was going to be had been known beforehand, for I was greeted with vociferous cheers, not only from my own men, but from the infantry camp which I passed.

It was an odd little episode and, as generally happens on these occasions, everybody concerned had acted with the best intentions. Above all, the regimental commander was absolutely justified in all that he did and said, and, I suppose, but for his intervention, this flagrant act of disobedience must have been my undoing. Moreover, it was on his recommendation that I was mentioned in despatches and received the Distinguished Service Order, and, I presume, though I do not know, that this award was in respect of this and one other occasion. When I was appointed Secretary of State for War, eight and a half years later, Sir Ian Hamilton, who had known me and been my friend from my early days, wrote me a most amusing letter. He said, "You probably think you are the only Secretary of State for War who has been under arrest for disobedience of orders on active service. You are wrong, for one of your predecessors was also placed under arrest. The only difference is that he was arrested for leaving a position, while you were arrested for refusing to leave it!"

Then followed long wearisome treks, still relieving and provisioning the infantry garrisons which had been established when it was thought that the war was over. Reitz, Vrede, Bethlehem, back to Harrismith, Bethlehem, Vrede and Reitz, such was our itinerary. Opposition was constantly increasing



HAMPSHIRE YEOMANRY IN ACTION
Near Bethlehem, S. Africa, 1900. The Author in foreground with telescope

Photo by Major Heseltine

and constantly better directed. We were advanceguard or rear-guard every day.

There was always a certain amount of shooting, and one learnt a good deal about the realities of war.

The increasing opposition was due to the perfecting of Botha's re-organisation scheme, which he described to me in full detail after the war. The consequences were curious and disconcerting to the British forces and the British Government. It had been assumed that the war was practically over, and, as a result, infantry garrisons were posted all over the country to maintain order until peace was signed. Actually Botha had no intention whatever of abandoning the struggle, and had at his disposal a fighting force of first-class mounted men approximately equal in number to our own. He was thus enabled to detach a few to watch each infantry garrison and convert it into a besieged force. These mounted men who were first-class rifle shots could surround a whole battalion of infantry and put them, for all purposes of daily life into the position of a beleaguered garrison. Curiously enough the infantry battalion were not much better off if they had a section of guns to help them. Any movement of troops by day would be subjected to accurate long-range fire from ever changing and wholly invisible positions. Meantime the mounted forces at the disposal of Lord Kitchener were constantly opposed by equal or superior numbers concentrated for the purpose, with the result that during the autumn of 1900, although we had officially declared that the war was over and had issued a proclamation that all the Boers were rebels, we suffered the loss of at least two fortified places, with all their ammunition and stores and many hundreds of prisoners. At the same time, if infantry were included, our total numbers in the field were overwhelmingly superior to the Boers. In this disconcerting situation a very foolish decision was taken, which, so far as I know, was regarded by every soldier as not less disagreeable to carry out than it was unwise to decree. The decision was to burn the

farms of such Boers as were known to be in the field. We all protested against it, and in the part of the country where I was at this time, not very much farm burning was done. But the folly of the thing was manifest. The Boers, obviously, had a perfect right to fight on, and the British, of all people in the world, should have been the first to acknowledge it, seeing that for hundreds of years they had never owned defeat. Moreover, as a military manoeuvre it was fantastic. A burnt farm offers a much better defensive position than one that has not been burnt; there is all the advantage of cover from rifle fire without the risk of the roof being set alight by shell fire. In my view all protests which were made at home against farm burning were amply justified. On the other hand, the vehement denunciations of the policy of collecting the women and children into concentration camps were quite unsound. All the fighting Boers having been removed, the women were left to the tender mercy of the Kaffirs on the farms. In many cases they were faithful and true, but in many others they were ready and willing to pay off old scores. The only humane thing to do, once the Boers had elected to continue the struggle to the end, was for us, the stronger party, to collect the women and children, take them to a place of safety, and tend and care for them. That mistakes were made in the concentration camps was no doubt true, but the policy was unavoidable, and was forced upon us by the courageous determination of the Boers to leave their homes and go with their commanders wherever their services were needed.

The actual process of gathering the women and children was distressing, but strange and sometimes even comic. I have seen a crowd of women in wagons, who were really only too thankful to be taken with their families to a place of safety where there was food, drink and shelter, nevertheless, standing up and shouting with delight in a fervour of patriotic zeal when the Boers galloped down and occupied a kopje on the route.

It was during this period that I had a most unusual experi-

ence, for which, as so often happened, I received unmerited credit. We were engaged in denuding the country of supplies, especially food and forage, with a view to hampering the enemy's mobility. For this purpose, on a day in October, we moved up a broad valley with high kopjes on each side, my squadron being advance guard. My orders were to clear the ridges on both sides, as well as making good the front in order to enable the column to proceed. After we had gone about three miles up the valley considerable long range rifle fire was opened on us from the hills on our left. I sent Godfrey Hazeltine with one troop to go over the ridge to our left rear, and endeavour to get behind the enemy, while I with three troops adopted the very usual manœuvre of moving forward with the apparent intention of going straight on, having given orders on a signal to wheel left-handed and charge up to the top of the hill. On this occasion the plan succeeded admirably. The great majority of the enemy, who were in rather larger numbers than had been reported, galloped forward to occupy the portion of the hills to our front and left front, leaving the part of the crest line for which I had elected to gallop almost undefended.

It so happened that I was riding a very good grey pony, which my men had christened "John Milton," because he was quite blind in one eye. But he was extraordinarily fast, very difficult to stop, and a marvellous jumper. The natural consequence followed. I gave the signal, and the three troops wheeled left into line. It is always exciting galloping a kopje, and I was excited with the rest; so was John Milton, who went like an arrow from a bow, at twice the speed of the others. For a time I was pleased enough, but when I found myself a quarter of a mile in front of my three troops I took a pull. It was no earthly good; John Milton continued his career. But more than that: At the foot of the kopje there was a long slope at a very steep angle, with big rocks and ledges. This astonishing pony galloped up the slant, and jumped two of these ledges—quite five feet high—thus landing me almost at the top, while

my men were dismounting and starting to run up, two hundred feet below me. I was being fired at from my right, so I scrambled up the remaining few yards to the top, where I saw a big rock behind which I could lie, with the added advantage that I could see over the plateau. When I got to this rock, which was about ten feet square and eight feet high, there was no sign of the enemy, so I walked round it. As I came round the square corner a very good looking young man bumped into me—we actually touched. I was so excited, so out of breath, so elated at having got to the top, with the prospect of getting the ridge without losing a man, that for some strange reason, for quite a second, I did not realise that being an enemy I must endeavour to strike him. In fact, I remember quite well, my first instinct was to beg his pardon. I had no weapon with me except a little knobkerry, which I always carried. Realising the position at last, I stepped back and raised my hand to strike him. He, from long habit, which had almost become an instinct, instead of shooting me with his rifle from the hip, as he could easily have done, ran back about five yards, dropped behind a stone and then fired. This gave me time to drop behind another stone at my feet, and the bullet splintered against the stone. He fired three more shots before the first of my men to arrive at the top came up to me—I remember his name was Cheverton. I shouted to him that there was a man behind the stone, and would he please shoot him, which he promptly did, through the right foot. Then fire became general, for the Boers had sent about twenty men back to oppose us, and had occupied a line of stones about one hundred and fifty yards away. My men returned the fire, and I waited for the result of Heseltine's encircling movement. Meantime, my friend the enemy, with whom I had collided, wriggled away on his stomach in between the stones back to his comrades. I saw him go, and, frankly, was extremely glad that nobody else spotted him. Presently bullets came singing over, obviously from longer range—Heseltine's troop had got round.

The Boers retired; we tried to follow them up, but they had got their horses close by in a little hollow, and we saw them gallop away, with my wounded friend across the saddle of one. I followed the trail of blood, from the place at which he had been shot up to where he had been lifted on to the horse, and almost fear he must have lost too much blood to live. I hope not, for he was indeed a brave man to run forward all alone to the edge of the ridge in order to oppose our coming.

It falls to be said that through all these strange and difficult experiences the British soldier never failed in humanity. It is equally true that the Boers too showed a fine example of restraint when, having been declared rebels and liable to be shot, they still continued right through the war to show mercy to the many prisoners they took, until, almost at the end, they captured one of our best generals, Lord Methuen. They tended him carefully, nursed his wounds and restored him to us to continue his faithful service to his country. It was this spirit of humanity which made peace possible, and which will make it enduring.

A terrible epidemic of typhoid broke out in Harrismith, which was our base. It is curious to reflect that in the World War typhoid was almost completely eliminated on the western front, although one would have thought that the desperate overcrowding in the restricted trench area would have made it a far more formidable foe. I have always thought that this was the greatest triumph of medical science. But in South Africa this science was completely at fault, or perhaps it did not get its chance. I remember meeting an Irish doctor in Harrismith on our return from a three weeks' trek. I said: "How is the typhoid going on?" He replied: "My dear boy, the death rate is one thousand two hundred and ninety-seven per thousand per annum." I could not help laughing, while I said: "Surely you have got the number wrong, you can't have over a hundred per cent. What does your figure of one thousand two hundred and ninety-seven per thousand mean?" He answered: "It means that if we stay here a year all of us

will be dead, and a quarter of us will have to die twice over." He was a man of great competence, who did wonders in combating this terrible plague. The truth was, of course, that at the rate named, which fortunately was only temporary, the whole garrison would have been dead in nine months.

Early in the following year came the first peace negotiations between General Botha, Lord Milner and Lord Kitchener. We knew nothing about it in the eastern Free State, except for brief messages that negotiations were in progress; but there was no armistice; then the negotiations broke down and Botha received a safe conduct back to his lines.

We had just arrived at Standerton, after seven weeks continued trekking over the veldt, suffering casualties from time to time and many deaths from typhoid. My unit was particularly fortunate in escaping the ravages of the disease, and we suffered much less than the rest. On arrival at Standerton I was informed that we were to have three weeks to rest and refit. I prepared indents for horses and equipment of various kinds, and remember well going to bed in a tent for the first time for months, with the intention of sleeping for twelve solid hours. At 1 a.m., after I had been asleep for about half an hour, I was awakened by a staff officer, who informed me that we were to march at once to the railway; that I was appointed to command a small column then being assembled at Newcastle, in northern Natal; that a concentration was taking place to press Botha and his force against the Swazi border and compel their surrender. My little column was to form part of this investing force. So away we went to the railway line. At Newcastle I found my command assembled. In addition to my own squadron I had ninety-seven cavalry details, three hundred and eighty Johannesburg Mounted Police and Loxton's Scouts.

My life has been full of exceptional coincidences, but the command of this column resulted in the most remarkable one that has fallen to my lot or indeed to the lot of most other men. We passed through Utrecht to the high ground beyond. We

got in touch with the force on our left, but not with that on our right. The weather was terrible—constant rain, every stream a torrent and ever river a flood; both the broad flat banks of the Pivaan River were so soggy and deep that the oxen sank into the mud until they disappeared, and the convoys could not be got through. The wounded suffered the extremity of misery; they could not be extricated, and their wounds gangrened. All this I saw as we pressed on.

My advance guard arrived at a high ridge. In the centre of the four mile front, which I occupied, was a single tree, and the place was christened "Lone Tree Hill." I established my outpost line just below the ridge, with vedettes on the summit, and my own camp about a mile in rear. We had had little opposition that day, but I had received a message that a large force of the enemy was not far distant. The message added that the force was moving north and so not likely to attack my part of the line. Nevertheless, not unnaturally, I was anxious as I moved along my outpost line, as all commanders do during the night. At about one o'clock I reached one of my posts, a corporal and two men, just twenty yards to the north of the lone tree. A fine rain was falling and there was a mist, but the moon was up and one could see a little way. I lay down beside the corporal, who said that he had just heard horses' hoofs. Hardly had he said it when a figure appeared dimly in the mist, on horseback, riding towards us. The corporal was about to fire, but I snatched his rifle from him, whispering, "Let him come on." The mist was drifting in swathes over the hill and for a moment he was invisible, while I heard the horse advancing on the stony ground; then for a second I saw a commanding figure silhouetted against the grey mist. The corporal was so excited that he shouted to me quite loud: "Shoot, sir." The figure turned and galloped away, I fired, re-loaded and fired again; I ran forward with the corporal, but although the range was not more than fifteen yards, I had made a clean miss both times. I make this one confident claim to distinction, that I

made the luckiest bad shot for the British Empire that any man has made! For the commanding figure was Botha himself! He was reconnoitring his enemy's front before making his desperate and successful effort to break through. Fortunately, there is no doubt whatever about it, for when the war was over and my friendship with Botha, destined to become so close and so intimate, began, he described to me in detail his movements when he found our encircling columns troublesome and possibly fatal to his forces. He said: "My intelligence was good, and it will surprise you to hear that I knew the commander of every column and more or less the composition of his force. I knew that you had some very new troops in the Johannesburg Mounted Police at the south of the line opposed to me, and I must have come within a few miles of you when I made a night reconnaissance of your position; it was a misty night and I stumbled up against a patrol, but whether it was one of yours or not I do not know, at any rate it was in your neighbourhood. I had a very lucky escape, for when the mist cleared for a second or two someone had a couple of shots at me at very short range, fortunately he must have been an extraordinarily bad shot, as he missed me by an inch or two each time."

"Were those the only shots fired that night?"

"Yes."

"Whereabouts was it?"

"On the top of a ridge, I well remember the place, because there was a single tree—the only one for miles."

"I fired those shots!"

He grasped my hand and said: "Fortune saved me, now we shall do much together." All this he told me at dinner in a private room in the House of Commons, on the occasion of his first visit to England after the war, when many regarded him with suspicion, and even with anger.

I like to remember that eight years later Botha sat in the gallery of the House of Commons while I proposed the South Africa Union Bill. I like to remember that it fell to my lot

to recommend the King to make him a lieutenant-general of the British Army, and that the King said: "This is a most unprecedented proposal, for it is true that we have made people major-generals in our army for their services on our side, but this is the first time a sovereign has been asked to make a man a lieutenant-general for his brilliant services against us." I like to remember that the King solved the problem by saying: "Nevertheless, I do know that the Right Honourable Louis Botha has rendered outstanding services to the Empire by showing the same qualities of steadfastness and courage in making peace, as he showed in the war when he fought against us, and I authorise you to prepare his appointment as a full general in the British Army."

It really was a fortunate miss, for the range was very close, and, although I have no sort of eminence in the rifle shooting world, I have received many prizes, and have shot many living things.

The operations against Botha were unsuccessful. By a brilliant attack he managed to extricate himself from the net. As all the world knows he continued the war for another year, and ultimately negotiated a peace on terms more favourable to his country than he could have obtained at the time when the first negotiations broke down.

At the close of this period, but while still in command of my little column I contracted acute dysentery. I very nearly died, but a week or two of kind nursing by Mrs. Graham, the wife of the commandant, in her house in Utrecht, pulled me round. A further ten days' rest in Johannesburg restored me to health. When I arrived there I weighed myself at the Rand Club, and found my weight was only seven stone eight pounds. A friend recommended me to eat plenty of eggs. I bought twenty-four at two shillings each, and ate them all in one day.

At Johannesburg I met two men with whom I was to have much to do in after years. The first was Lord Milner, who showed me much kindness. The last time I had seen him was

when he was the Liberal candidate for Harrow, where I was almost the only boy in the school to espouse his cause. As a consequence I had been involved in an election riot, for my share in which I got two black eyes and severe punishment from the school authorities. In spite of his great kindness to me, which, of course, predisposed me in favour of his views, I found myself in complete disagreement with him. His conception of the future, as I remember it, was laboriously to build up as perfect a state as could be made and then, only after long years, hand it back to the inhabitants. To me, on the other hand, it seemed plain that the sooner we gave them self-government the better. When we discussed this he was very patient; he said at the end of the conversation, in almost the identical words used to me by Mr. Chamberlain four months later: "All you soldiers are pro-Boers." But whatever the true merits of this question there can be no doubt that Lord Milner's work of re-organisation, the foundation of which he had already laid in May, 1901, was of immense value to South Africa. Indeed, I doubt if the happy solution of South African Union, in which I was to bear a considerable part, could ever have been brought about but for the patient work and organisation of Lord Milner and his subordinates.

The other man who was destined to influence future events, and, incidentally, my own political future, was Frederic Cresswell, now Colonel Cresswell, D.S.O., the leader of the South African Labour Party and a member of General Hertzog's cabinet. He had been general manager of the Durban Deep Mine before the war, at the outbreak of which he joined the Imperial Light Horse, and was appointed a lieutenant. He served in that fine regiment with credit, and had just been brought back to the Rand to help in the reorganisation of the gold mines for production; for this purpose he had been made general manager of the Village Main Reef Mine. He showed me over the mine, and explained the various processes. He then proceeded to expound to me with great

eloquence, his conception of the future of South Africa. It was to be a place where the mines were worked entirely by white labour—British and Dutch alike—where ideal labour conditions would prevail, and the two nations automatically come together by their joint experiences in all business enterprises. He told me that other people wanted to continue with black labour, and that there was already serious talk of importing coloured labour from elsewhere.

Thus, in that short time in Johannesburg I learnt at first hand from two men, who later took the lead on opposite sides, the completely conflicting points of view which each held. The fact that both of them were men of transparent honesty and high patriotism made the divergence the more interesting and, in the long run necessarily more acute.

Some months after the unsuccessful operations against Botha, the original yeomanry who had volunteered—my own amongst them—were relieved by other squadrons raised to take their place. Accordingly, at Kronstadt, early in May, we embarked at Cape Town on the steam ship *Mongolian*, and landed at Southampton on May 31st, 1901. We had been absent from England for nearly a year and a half, during the greater part of which time we had been in contact with the enemy. We had trekked about six thousand miles on horseback, and had been without tents most of the time. Without doubt we had learnt a great deal; above all, to trust each other in dangerous times. It was with infinite regret that I parted with my men, after they had received their war medals on the Horse Guards Parade.

Those of my readers who love horses, will be glad to know that one among the many fortunate circumstances that befell me was that a white Arab pony, named "Maharajah," which I took to South Africa, survived the whole time, came back to England, and lived happily at Brooke for many years. This was the more remarkable, seeing how heavy the casualties were in horses, not only from wounds, but from hunger, thirst and

starvation. I remember one morning superintending the shooting by my sergeant-major of fourteen horses which were too exhausted to continue the trek. I think all of us officers had more than one horse shot at different times, so that it was very lucky that my little pony survived.

CHAPTER VI

England Again—1901—Conservative Member for Isle of Wight—First Letter to "The Times"—Joseph Chamberlain and "Pro-Boer" Soldiers—"Treaty" of Vereeniging—Inauguration of National Service League—A Million Pounds in Cash—Swiss Manœuvres—A Prophecy

IT was a wonderful experience to rejoin one's wife and family after such a long separation. My two older children remembered me, but my second son, who had been six months old when I left, eyed me with the greatest surprise, remarking: "Is *this* my daddy?" We South African soldiers were all of us extremely thin, with our faces and hands tanned like the Arabs of the desert.

People often ask me what was the difference between the South African and the World War. My answer is that the salient elements of discomfort and danger in the one were absent from the other, and vice versa. Thus, in the South African War muscular fatigue, hunger and especially thirst were the enemies, to which should be added really accurate long range rifle fire. All these were absent on the west front in the World War, as general influences. Of course one had muscular fatigue from carrying up rations or from going round front line trenches in the winter, and one suffered from hunger and thirst when lying out in a shell hole. Also there were snipers, with periscopic sights, on both sides, but these things did not affect the great body of the active army on the western front, while in South Africa they were the common lot of all. On the other hand, on the western front there was the intense bombardment by high explosives, the sweeping hail of unaimed rifle and machine gun fire, the hand-to-hand conflicts with

sword, bayonet, hand grenade and knife. With occasional exceptions all these were lacking from the South African front. Some things were exactly the same in both, although, alas, many refused to learn. The immense power of resistance given by invisible rifle fire, makes it possible to say with confidence that it was proved in the South African War as an elementary and certain truth that all attacks by infantry in daylight against an enemy in position were and must always be, a folly. The failure to realise this truth cost us thousands of lives needlessly sacrificed in South Africa; it cost us hundreds of thousands in the World War.

In 1901 I took my seat in the House of Commons as the Conservative member for the Isle of Wight. I had been elected twice during my absence; the first time when I was opposed to Sir Godfrey Baring, in May, 1900, and the second time, at the General Election in the following October, when I was returned unopposed. Mr. Balfour was Prime Minister, and I immediately conceived an intense admiration for him, which has lasted uninterruptedly up to this day.

I remember one of my friends in the House of Commons, who had not been in the South African War, discussing with me the question of what type of man is the bravest in action. I told him I had always found that the very brave men were of the romantic, dreamy, thoughtful type; I did not know why that should be, but I had known so many instances of it that I was sure I was right. He replied: "Well, whom would you choose of those now in the House of Commons for a desperate enterprise?" I said: "Need you ask? Obviously Mr. Arthur Balfour, he is of the serene unperturbed type that alone withstands prolonged imminent danger." My experience of nearly four years on the western front in the World War has only tended to confirm the opinion I formed during the South African War. In every instance the men in my command who received the Victoria Cross were of this quiet, gentle, dreamy type; often musical, nearly always fond of poetry; without

exception beloved of animals and especially of children. The same thing can be said of the many more who received the Distinguished Service Order, the Military Cross and the Distinguished Conduct Medal, as immediate reward for gallantry in the field. In war unselfish courage counts so much more than any other quality that it may be said to outweigh all the others put together. Sir Ian Hamilton once said to me, when I propounded this view to him, that he quite agreed; that the strange thing was that real unselfish courage could not be taught to anyone—perhaps he might have learnt it at his mother's knee, but certainly not later. I think this is true; General Botha expressed the same view. Nor do I agree with the cant saying that there are two sorts of courage, physical and moral. They are both exactly the same when it comes to a really desperate moment. At these times, in my experience, the swash-buckler type always crumples up.

Everyone was very kind to me in the House of Commons, where the older members remembered my father and grandfather, who between them had been in the House more than fifty years. My chief friends amongst the Unionists were Winston Churchill, Lord Hugh Cecil, Alfred Lyttelton, George Wyndham, Sir John Dickson Poynder—now Lord Islington—and, of course, my brother Charles, the member for Lincoln. I had many Liberal friends too, the chief amongst them being that remarkable and most lovable of men, the Master of Elibank. He was universally known as Alick, and was equally popular with Conservatives, Liberals and Nationalists, and this although his Liberal views were most definite and most pronounced. The Murrays of Elibank had been Whigs for many generations, but the tenth Lord Elibank—Alick's father—was a Conservative, and had been appointed Lord Lieutenant of his county by the Queen during the term of office of a Conservative Government. For a time there was acute political divergence between father and son. Nevertheless, Alick continued his political career, and was elected in turn

for Midlothian, Peebles and Selkirk, and again Midlothian. He became Chief Whip to Mr. Asquith and his most trusted adviser.

It is difficult to say who was my greatest friend in the House of Commons, but without doubt the man to whose judgment, foresight and kindness I owed the most was Alick.

I do not know how or why it came about that I at once made friends with the Irish Nationalists—John Redmond, his brother William, T.P. O'Connor, Joe Devlin, Swift MacNeill—afterwards Speaker in the first Irish Free State Parliament—and especially Stephen Gwynn, but they all seemed in some strange way to share my views and wish to help me. Indeed, throughout my time in the House, and there were some very difficult ones, these men never once failed to support me. I fear I gave them nothing in return, and can only tender them my grateful thanks.

In July, of 1901, I wrote my first letter to *The Times*—the first of a long series. A newspaper correspondent had stated that the Boers murdered wounded men, and I wrote the following letter, to which *The Times* was good enough to give prominence:—

I have this morning seen an article, written by a newspaper correspondent in South Africa, stating that the "Boers murder wounded men," and that this is a "frequent incident."

I venture to ask you to publish this letter for the sake of those, tens of thousands in number, whose anxiety for their husbands, sons, brothers, is great enough already without the addition of this fresh terror.

During the seventeen months that I served in South Africa, I had, perhaps, rather exceptional opportunities of learning how our wounded were treated by the Boers.

On two different occasions men under my command who were dangerously wounded were attended to by the Boers; in each case they were tended with the greatest kindness and care, and the

wounded men themselves begged me to thank those who had been so good to them; on both occasions the general in command of the column conveyed his thanks, either personally or by letter.

I have spoken to many officers and men who have been left sick or wounded in the hands of the Boers, and in no single instance have I heard anything but gratitude expressed for the treatment they had received.

In the intense excitement of hand-to-hand fighting it may be difficult to differentiate between the wounded and the unwounded; but the relatives and friends of those now fighting may rest assured that Englishmen left wounded on the field will receive from the Boers no less care and kindness than wounded Boers have invariably received from the British.

Shortly after I wrote this letter, one summer's night towards the end of the session, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain asked me to have supper alone with him. He was then at the zenith of his power and physical vigour, when it was a high privilege to talk to a man with so penetrating a brain and such incisive speech. He told me that he had heard of my violent objection to the policy of farm burning, and asked me to talk to him about it. I explained at great length my point of view; that the Boers were a brave and generous race, and under most difficult circumstances had observed all the rules and decencies of war; that the accusations of treachery against them were nearly all unfounded, and that at the end of the war we should find it much easier to make friends with them than with many other elements in South Africa, together with much more to the same effect. He listened with the utmost patience, and whenever I stopped begged me to go on.

It was a late sitting and, I remember, we ate sausages and drank champagne and stout mixed—an excellent drink much beloved by the famous Bismarck. At the end of supper Mr. Chamberlain said to me: "Well, I wonder if you are right, we

shall know some day; in the meantime all you soldiers are what they call here pro-Boers." The conversation is especially interesting in view of what happened when Mr. Chamberlain went to South Africa after the war was over. He had a somewhat stormy interview with the mine owners in Johannesburg, when he failed to persuade them to put up the sum for which he asked them for reconstruction. What the rights of the matter were I do not pretend to know, but without doubt, he was bitterly disappointed. Immediately afterwards, it may be recalled, he drove to Potchefstroom to meet a Boer commando under Dalarey. The Boers were drawn up on the veldt to receive him, and he made a speech remarkable for its sincere eloquence. He said that on the way he had passed the graves of many Boers and many British, lying side by side, and concluded with the moving peroration: "The dead of both races rest together in peace; let us, who live, live also in peace." The lines written about this speech at the time are worth remembering:—

"They sleep possessed of her they sought, Britain and Boer,
side by side,
They both alike for freedom fought, for freedom died,
Here let us bury outworn hate for ever 'neath the tear
stained sod,
And build a new and better state for man and God."

After the parliamentary session was over, Sir Barrington Simeon, then Member for Southampton and a close friend of my father and all my family, suggested that I should make a tour of the Isle of Wight in the autumn, kindly offering to take the chair for me at each meeting. It was extremely kind of him, because in those days nobody except perhaps Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, had a motor car. We did all our journeys in a dog cart with a pair of horses, often having fifteen or more miles to go and return in storms of wind and rain. I well remember driving him back from the final meeting to his

home at Swainston. As we drove along a country lane he said to me: "Jack, there is something I think I must tell you. I have now listened to all your speeches with very great pleasure, and think they were excellent." I replied: "I am sure that is not true, but it is very kind of you to say so: but what else do you want to say?" He said: "This. Though excellent, nobody by any stretch of imagination, could describe them as Conservative speeches." I was genuinely and completely taken aback. I had not the least idea that I was offending my Conservative friends by the things I said.

The following session of parliament was largely devoted to education, and I took a minor part in the debates. Of course, everything was overshadowed by the continuance of the war, and a great many of us began to think that if it was going on it was our duty to go back again. I had been promoted to command a squadron of the Hampshire Yeomanry, and spent much of my time with them, attending drills, war games and the like.

Peace came at last by the Treaty of Vereeniging, signed on May 31st, 1902. It is easy for me to remember the date, because it is my birthday. I say the "Treaty" of Vereeniging, as I was told so to describe it by a wise and exalted personage. Some years later, when I was Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, and in charge of the South Africa Union Bill in the House of Commons, King Edward sent for me to ask me questions on various points. In the course of the conversation, I referred unwittingly to the "surrender" of Vereeniging. "Never say that," he said. I begged pardon and amended it to the "Peace" of Vereeniging. He said: "No, your friend, General Botha, is a great man. I know what he would wish it to be called in order to heal the breach between the Boers and British—the Treaty of Vereeniging," and so I believe it is officially styled.

Great was the relief when peace was made. A few foolish people wanted to continue the war until, as they put it, we had caught the last Boer; but they were unimportant and few in

number. Also they were laughed out of court by the recollection of the comical episode which had happened, two years previously, when the war had been in progress about nine months. Someone at headquarters incautiously published to the troops a statement of the number of Boers in the field, and then from week to week the number captured. I remember receiving these figures myself a month or two after the taking of Pretoria, in 1901. The captures continued and began to approach within measurable distance of the total originally stated. Then it became necessary to stop issuing the number of captures; however, we received the figures somehow. My readers can imagine the shout of laughter that went up from the whole army when, one fine day, although our columns were busily fighting a skilful enemy in all parts of South Africa, from official documents it was proved that not only were no Boers left in the field, but that they were actually minus fifty-seven!

The war ended with general goodwill in May, and on June 26th following, came the Coronation of King Edward and Queen Alexandra, which, as a member of the House of Commons, I was privileged to attend. The radiant beauty of Queen Alexandra and the debonair dignity of the King, who had only just recovered from his dangerous illness, will never be forgotten by those who witnessed the Coronation.

At this time the National Service League was inaugurated at a meeting at Apsley House, the Duke of Wellington took the chair, and speeches were made by Lord Roberts and others. I had been invited to attend and speak, but from the outset it was clear that I was not of one mind with the others. I was out for inducing every man to give voluntary service in some branch of the army or navy. The others regarded it as essential that it should become compulsory service on the Swiss model. Sir Clinton Dawkins was the life and soul of the league, and he and I had many discussions on the point, at his country home and in London. I well remember our final meeting, when we



A GROUP WITH THE AUTHOR IN CENTRE
Sir Robert Johnson, now head of the Royal Mint, in foreground

agreed to differ. We dined together at Claridge's, and he remarked that he was probably the only man in that room or any other, who had actually paid out a million pounds in cash that day. After a most eminent career in the Civil Service, including the highest financial posts in Egypt and India, he had decided to adopt a commercial career, with a view ultimately to entering the House of Commons. He joined the firm of Morgans, with a very high salary—I suppose the highest ever paid in those days—but his financial record was so remarkable that he could well claim it. On the day of which I speak he had completed the purchase of the White Star and most of the other Transatlantic lines, except the Cunard. He told me that some of the White Star shareholders refused to accept cheques or bills or notes of any kind, and insisted on payment in cash. He had accordingly attended at the governor's office at the Bank of England, and had paid over these gigantic sums in cash. Alas, Sir Clinton Dawkins was not destined to continue the career he had mapped out for himself, for he died not long afterwards. In him England lost a brilliant brain and a devoted servant.

Soon after this I got permission to attend the Swiss manoeuvres with my intimate friend Bobby Johnson, who, having served with me in the South African War, had returned to the Scottish Education Department. He gave all his spare time to military duties, passed every examination which it was possible for him to go in for, and was in addition an exceptionally competent officer in the First Volunteer Battalion of the Hampshire Regiment. He also wrote a great deal on military subjects, and as he had proved himself a courageous leader in the field, his views were listened to with respect, although they did not get much assent in military quarters.

Together we arrived at Zurich, and found ourselves installed in an hotel with military representatives from most European nations. The manoeuvres were of great interest, especially in relation to their supply, transport, and equipment of all kinds

for mountain warfare. One morning we were told by the general staff that the manœuvres would not take place in mountainous country, there would only be "undulations." How well I remember a rather fat Prussian officer "undulating" with me over the crest of a hill one thousand seven hundred metres high on an exceptionally hot day!

Of course there were the same absurd daylight infantry attacks, which we knew to be foredoomed to failure, but, as I have before indicated, the military mind on the Continent, as at home, had completely failed to realise the appalling power of machine gun and, especially, rifle fire with smokeless powder, rendering the defenders invisible and thus to a large degree invulnerable. A few years later, when I attended German manœuvres, I witnessed these same ridiculous daylight attacks, and ventured to prophesy in a memorandum which I wrote to the War Office that the German losses in the early phases of war would be terrible, although they would no doubt soon learn their lesson. I remember Sir John French reminded me of this memorandum at the close of the first battle of Ypres, saying that the first part of my prophesy had come true, but that he feared the second would be fulfilled also, as indeed it was./

At the close of the Swiss manœuvres I had a long interview, in Berne, with the Swiss War Minister. I told him how much I had been impressed with his army, that I was only a young amateur soldier, and that my opinion was not of much value, but from what I had learnt in a year and a half of active service, it certainly would be a formidable element in any future war. He replied that he hoped that what I said was true, because if France and Germany went to war, as he was certain they would, Switzerland might well be involved. The rôle of the Swiss Army was definitely fixed, and the whole population knew and agreed to it. Switzerland would declare her neutrality. If France crossed her frontier the Swiss Army would be the left flank of the Germans. If Germany invaded Switzerland the Swiss would be right flank of the French. From this determina-

tion they had no intention of flinching, whatever it might cost. He was moved as he spoke, and I see him now, bringing his fist slowly down on the table as he said: "I do not wish to boast, but I know it is true that every Swiss man is prepared to die to maintain his country inviolate." As the event proved, the persistent efforts of the Swiss to perfect their little army were amply rewarded. In nearly four and a half years of the most desperate conflict in history, when the battle raged unceasingly round the Swiss frontier, never once did a hostile foot dare to tread upon her soil.

Towards the end of our interview I told the Swiss Minister of our difficulties in producing the Swiss system in England; our people did not believe in the possibility of invasion so long as they had a great fleet. They had not, therefore, the inducement to serve which produces the citizen army of Switzerland. I told him I was anxious to see every man voluntarily trained to arms, because one never knew what might happen. He said: "In my country the dilemma does not arise. It is true we have conscription because of the great advantages in organisation, but, in fact, every Swiss is ready and anxious to serve, and in that sense they are all volunteers." I asked him if it would not be possible, that being so, to raise their army on a voluntary basis, to which he answered: "Oh, no. Conscription is the foundation of it all." This was one up for Lord Roberts and the National Service League.

Nevertheless, I am quite sure that it was impossible to pass conscription in this country before the war, and that therefore it would have been a profound error to attempt to do so.

But the true lessons which we learnt from the Swiss Army were, first, that competent officers could be made of men who had proved themselves competent in responsible civil positions, giving their spare time only to military service, and, secondly, that for the rank and file a bare minimum of parade drill and manœuvre would suffice. After all one cannot practice cricket beyond a certain point without a real cricket ball!

CHAPTER VII

Army Reform Movement, 1903—Duke of Devonshire and Free Trade—Chinese Labour Controversy—Alfred Lyttleton—Change to Liberal Party—A Dark Meeting—Member for Liverpool.

I SPENT the autumn largely on military duty, and in founding rifle clubs throughout the Isle of Wight, my idea being that learning accurate rifle shooting is the best preparation for war.

The following session in 1903 marked the real beginning of my parliamentary career. Mr. Winston Churchill and I had formed very clear ideas of the lessons of the South African War, and we were quite sure that St. John Brodrick—now Lord Midleton—was proceeding on wrong lines. His army corps scheme was especially displeasing to us. Just before Christmas, Mr. Churchill and I went together to a Conservative bazaar in Manchester. Each of us made violent denunciations of Mr. Brodrick and all his works, to the astonishment of the women and children who were present, and to the rage of the chairman who announced that as a loyal supporter of the Government, he completely disassociated himself from the remarks of Mr. Churchill and Major Seely.

Mr. Churchill then conceived the idea of forming a small parliamentary group to endeavour to defeat the plan. We called ourselves the "Army Reform Movement," the original members being: Mr. Churchill, myself, Lord Hugh Cecil, Sir John Dickson-Poynder, and Mr. Ernest Beckett, afterwards Lord Grimthorpe. We were afterwards joined by Colonel Kemp (now Lord Rochdale), Ivor Guest (now Lord Wimborne), and Robert Yerburgh. We met just before the session of 1903 opened, and made our plan of campaign. We were going to defeat the Army Corps scheme and substitute

a sound plan of army reform. We found it a little difficult to agree on the new policy, so concentrated upon defeating Mr. Brodrick. We were very happy, quite convinced and quite sincere. It was settled that Ernest Beckett should move an amendment to the address, and that I should second it, also that at all subsequent stages of the business, whether on the army estimates or on any other occasion, we should intervene as army reformers. The domestic arrangements of the party were that we should meet at lunch or dinner, or both, on every day that Parliament was sitting, and that Ernest Beckett should be the treasurer, and responsible for all expenditure. As it turned out, this terrible obligation, which alarmed him at the time, cost him nothing, for in the stress of Parliamentary life the joint dinners and lunches soon came to an end.

The great day arrived when we launched our attack. Beckett made a really brilliant speech to a crowded house, and I followed as seconder. I remember seeing Lord Rosebery in the Peers' Gallery. Many years afterwards, when I dined with him, he said: "You young men at the beginning of 1903 had no idea of the decisive results which would follow from your joyous irruption into the placid sea of Conservatism."

I was sure from the moment of the first debate that the disintegration of the Tory party had begun, and would swiftly end in disaster.

Churchill, Hugh Cecil, Dickson-Poynder, all spoke in these and subsequent debates. We were joined by Sir John Gorst, Ian Malcolm, and others interested in army matters; for instance, Colonel Welby, an old Indian Cavalry officer.

They were strenuous weeks, for we prepared the attack with meticulous care from day to day. In the end, just before the Easter recess, all my colleagues were laid up with colds and influenza, and I was left alone. I remember telegraphing to Lord Hugh Cecil at Bournemouth to come and help me in a debate I raised on a purely technical financial resolution. Hugh Cecil gallantly defied his doctor's orders, and arrived at the



A cartoon from the *Westminster Gazette* of April 2nd, 1903 entitled "Primeval Cavewoman lecturing to a Fourth Party: Sir John Gorst, Mr. Beckett, Mr. Ian Malcolm, Major Seely, Mr. Winston Churchill, Lord Hugh Cecil, Mr. Gibson Bowles."

House of Commons in time to help me at the crucial moment in debate.

All through this time Mr. Brodrick and his financial secretary, Lord Stanley, retained their good humour, and never faltered in defending a policy in which they believed, but which they knew was receiving less and less support from every quarter in the House, and outside. Never were there more honourable antagonists than these two, and I rejoice to remember that on the last night of the army estimates they came to supper with us and vowed eternal friendship, while frankly prophesying continued political enmity.

Meanwhile the Prime Minister, Mr. Balfour, was so immersed in the great affairs of State that he never took much real interest in the Army controversy. The impression I formed was that he thought we were right all along, that it did not matter very much, and that we might as well fight it out with Mr. Brodrick, after which he could deal with the resulting situation. In the end this is what happened, for Mr. Brodrick was transferred to the India Office from the War Office and Mr. Arnold Foster took his place. This change did not suit our group at all, but other things overshadowed the Army controversy, and Mr. Arnold Foster continued the troublous task of Secretary of State for War without much interference from us for a brief period.

The great new event was the return of Mr. Chamberlain from South Africa. A cartoon of the day represented him as a spruce parroquet surveying a group of dilapidated parrots with most of their feathers pulled out by mischievous monkeys, represented by Ernest Beckett, Winston Churchill, and others. The dilapidated parrots exclaiming to the spruce parroquet: "We have been having a devil of a time." I think that this cartoon reflected Mr. Chamberlain's amused survey of his colleagues. When he left for South Africa they were strong, alert, successful men, and a united party, when he returned he found them dilapidated and disheartened. He had conceived

the idea of an imperial zollverein some time before, but we all believed then, and I still think, that it was the melancholy state of the Government and the Unionist Party which decided him to launch his campaign forthwith in the summer of 1903.

Mr. Chamberlain's announcement of his policy was a bomb-shell dropped into English political life. It so happened that I was the first Unionist Free Trader to make a speech on the subject, as I was due to speak at a Primrose League meeting at Belvoir Castle on the day following his announcement. I had been brought up on Free Trade, and believed it to be the ark of the covenant and the foundation of English prosperity and power. Both my grandfathers had been prominent members of the Anti-Corn Law League. I had had tea with Mr. Gladstone when I was a boy at Harrow, and had sat on John Bright's knee as a child. The idea of returning to Protection seemed to me to be positively wicked. As a consequence, in my speech at Belvoir I denounced the scheme in uncompromising fashion. I said that far from bringing the Empire closer together it would tend to sever it, because the basis of the whole scheme must be the taxing of bread, which was the food of the poorest. That the poorer people were, the greater the proportion of bread they ate, because it was the cheapest food that would sustain life, and that consequently, if the scheme went through, in times of scarcity every poor family would curse the Dominions and hate the name of Empire. That it had been my privilege to serve with Dominion troops for a long period in the recent war, that I had never heard a whisper of a demand for such a policy, that no one had said to me: "If you don't buy our beef we won't fight your battles." And so on and so forth in the style which became fashionable as the controversy went on. But I was the first to pronounce what became these well worn platitudes, and as a result I was hailed on my return to London as a prophet among Unionist Free Traders. A Unionist Free Trade group was formed at once at a meeting held in one of the committee rooms in the House

of Commons, on July 2nd, 1903. It was a remarkable meeting, attended by fifty-four Unionist Members of Parliament, also by Lord Goschen as ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer. Henry Hobhouse, a Privy Councillor, and an old and much respected Unionist member, was voted to the chair, and strong speeches in opposition to Mr. Chamberlain's proposals were made by Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, Lord Goschen and others. An organisation was formed, with Sir Michael Hicks-Beach as president, Mr. Henry Hobhouse as chairman, and myself as secretary, and arrangements were made for a great campaign in the country. The support of the Duke of Devonshire was promised, and a great meeting of Unionist Free Traders was to be held in the Queen's Hall.

I saw much of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach at this time; he did not share in the least my fanatical devotion to Free Trade, but he did not like Mr. Chamberlain and distrusted his scheme. He would say to me from time to time, at our frequent interviews: "Joe Chamberlain is in a desperate hurry. I don't like men in a hurry, they always do foolish things."

The Duke of Devonshire, whom I also saw frequently, was a convinced Free Trader. He liked Mr. Chamberlain personally and admired him, but thought he was wrong, and said so. His speech at the Queen's Hall meeting was wholly admirable, and in my view was the death knell of Mr. Chamberlain's scheme, at any rate for the time being. He stood very erect, facing the excited audience, and recited in clear, but quite unimpassioned tones, a series of telling phrases and arguments. At one point, I remember, he lost the thread of his argument. He stood perfectly still and quite silent, not for a few seconds, but for minutes, while the audience trembled to think that he was never going to speak again. He then filled a large glass with water, drank it off in a leisurely style, and continued his argument with telling effect, exactly where he had left off. Someone acidly said—I think Mr. Balfour, of a political opponent—that he always made great speeches on small sub-

jects and small speeches on great subjects. The exact opposite was the case of the Duke of Devonshire; if he spoke on a great occasion he always made a great speech.

In the end, as everyone remembers, the election was fought on two issues—the Fiscal controversy and Chinese labour.

Most people think that the decision of the electorate was mainly against Mr. Chamberlain and dear food. I do not believe this. I think a far greater factor of the defeat of Mr. Balfour's Government was the decision to import Chinese labour into South Africa. If there had been no Chinese labour I believe Mr. Chamberlain would have carried the day for Colonial Preference, if not at once, at any rate within a year or two. There was a certain number of academic Free Traders nourished on the lucid logic of Bastiat, who firmly believed that every country must pay its own taxes, and that you could no more make yourself richer by putting on import duties than you could lift yourself up if you stood in a stable bucket, by pulling at the handle. But the number of these people was very, very small, and the academic Free Trade argument made little appeal to the mass of the electorate. Moreover, the idea of drawing the Colonies closer to us was extremely popular. It was all very well for us to say that tariffs were not the best way to do it; the answer came pat from the men of the Dominions that they thought it a very good plan.

But when it came to the Chinese labour controversy, of which I had special knowledge, for I may claim to have originated the agitation in this country, the case was quite otherwise. While an overwhelming majority of the voters hated the idea, many of them with a passionate hatred, there was nothing but a tiny minority who really favoured the plan.

I am not dealing now with the merits of either controversy, but only with the effect upon the electorate, and I say again that it is my firm belief that had it not been for Chinese labour Mr. Balfour's Government would not have been defeated, and Mr. Chamberlain would have got his way. Many of those who

took part in the 1905 election may be inclined to agree with me; looking back on it they will remember the intense excitement caused by the Chinese labour controversy at the meetings which they addressed. There was a striking manifestation of this fact when Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman addressed his first meeting as Prime Minister, at the Albert Hall.

Mr. Churchill has told me that the meeting, though cordial and flushed with victory, never broke out into a real frenzy of enthusiasm until C. B. announced that no more Chinese should be allowed into South Africa. Then, indeed, I am told, though I did not attend, there was wild cheering, the like of which shrewd political observers had never heard before.

Let us now consider dispassionately how this great controversy arose, destined as it was so profoundly to affect the fortunes of English political parties, indeed of the Empire itself. I can only record with accuracy what I myself saw and did. In a previous chapter I described the great friendship which I formed during the South African War with Captain Creswell, the manager of the Village Main Reef Mine. I heard from him of the proposal to import indentured Chinese labour to work in the Transvaal Mines. His fixed idea, indeed his great ideal, was a purely white mining population on the Rand, all native labour to be gradually dispensed with. He was grieved beyond measure at the thought of all his hopes being shattered. Moreover, he genuinely believed that the plan was inherently wrong, that the Chinese could never form part of the community in which they lived, and, to quote Herbert Spencer's phrase on the same subject, that they must, therefore, become, if not actual slaves, in a position similar to slaves. If to this be added the fact that the great General Botha was strongly opposed to the Chinese Labour policy on the ground that it was difficult enough to run a country of blacks and whites without the added complication of the yellow, the case against the scheme was in his view complete; a dreadful ending to all we had striven for during the war.

Mr. Chamberlain had said that both sides believed that they were fighting for freedom, and yet the biggest and richest portion of the country was, as it seemed, to be turned into a semi-slave state. I vividly remember walking along the downs at home, thinking it over, trying to argue the case every way, and finally convincing myself that the whole idea was inherently and fatally wrong. Sitting on the top of Mottistone Down, I composed a letter to *The Times*, couched in strong language. I walked home, wrote the letter and sent it off. *The Times* did not then attach much importance to the matter, and put my letter in small print on a back page. But time had its revenge in this case, for I was told by Mr. Burt, the much respected Miners' Leader and Father of the House of Commons, that eventually a little over a million and a half copies of this letter were distributed through his organisation. The flames of controversy rose very quickly, and bitterness between Englishmen became more acute than at any time in my long years of parliamentary experience. Looking back on it all one can see why this was. The people who began the opposition to Chinese labour—Creswell in South Africa, myself at home—were filled with a genuine fiery zeal against a plan which they thought not only unwise, but wicked. On the other hand, those who supported it, Lord Milner in South Africa and Mr. Alfred Lyttelton—the Colonial Secretary here—were just as sincere, and, above all, were men of a quite exceptional standard of high honour, integrity and virtue. Indeed, it is not too much to say that these two men were almost the greatest upholders of those great qualities in English public life. I am quite sure that if anyone but Alfred Lyttelton had been Colonial Secretary the Chinese Labour Ordinance could never have received the Royal assent. No other man could have convinced a majority in the House of Commons that the cause was just.

Many friends gathered round me. I soon became just a soldier in the battle, but always playing a leading part. A meeting of protest was organised in London in which men of all parties

and all ranks denounced the plan. I arranged with Mr. Herbert Samuel, who had been elected some time before for the Cleveland Division of Yorkshire, that an amendment to the address should be moved by him, which I would second. This was the first of a series of debates, in which the heat engendered became ever greater.

Towards the end of the controversy, my brother, Charles, member for Lincoln, produced a sensation in the House of Commons by reading from a white paper just issued the objection of the Chinese Minister to the Chinese Labour Ordinance, which was being proposed by the Government in the Transvaal Legislature, and to which the consent of the House of Commons was asked. The Chinese Minister to the Court of St. James's, in cold unimpassioned words, raised objections to many points in the Ordinance, in order, as he said, to prevent his countrymen from being "Mere chattels or implements of industry." "We had come to a pretty pass," my brother said, "when England was reproved by a Chinaman, for degrading men so near to the level of slaves." But here again was shown the astonishingly straightforward spirit of Alfred Lyttelton. There was no need for him to make public all that the Chinese Minister had said. He knew perfectly well what a damning document it would be, but his sincerity was so absolute that he was determined that everything should be made plain, however severely it might tell against him.

In the next debate on the subject there was a somewhat violent scene. When I got up to make a final protest the Conservatives were so excited that they continued to howl. I managed to shout out that I would submit the matter to my constituents, but that was all. When Alfred Lyttelton stood up to speak later, he was, of course, still more effectively howled down by those who agreed with me.

That night I wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, formally applying for the Chiltern Hundreds, went down to the Isle of Wight next morning, and announced that since the

House of Commons would not listen to my protests, my unfortunate constituents would have to hear me. I issued an address, in which I asked for the support of all parties against this pernicious scheme. Reading it again, after twenty-five years, I see that it was an extraordinarily good address. I can say this without the least arrogance, because all the best parts of it were written by Mr. Churchill. He was, indeed, a trusty friend and doughty champion during those troublous times. It has been my good fortune to have had as intimate friends, both in peace and war, two eminent men, Winston Churchill and F. E. Smith (Lord Birkenhead). Churchill was with me in action during the South African War. In the World War we have been together in the front line on the Western Front on very many days and nights, and at least once in "No man's land." I have been with F. E. Smith on the Western Front when his horse has been shot by rifle fire at uncomfortably close range; he has accompanied me to the front line under really heavy rifle and machine gun fire. Though I was bound by my orders to go, and he was not, he would not leave me to go alone.

I have often differed from these two men, and probably shall do so again, but I wish to record the fact that if I had to choose two men to go "tiger hunting" with in war or in peace, I should feel myself fortunate beyond measure to be in their company. In war they do not flinch, in the controversies of peace they both have the rare and engaging quality, not only of supporting you when you are right, but also of supporting you when you are wrong, and squaring up the diverging claims of friendship and truth after the row is over.

But to return to the Isle of Wight. I told my somewhat dazed constituents that if the Chinese Labour Ordinances were withdrawn, and if the Unionist Party continued to uphold Free Trade, I should remain a member of that party; but if they adopted Protection and carried through Chinese labour, I should leave the party. In any case, on the day the first

Chinaman landed in South Africa, I should cross the floor and join the Opposition. I said that it was wrong for me to use their forbearance by trying to get myself elected as a Liberal for the place where the Conservatives had shown me so much generosity during and since the war, and that if I were compelled to become a Liberal I would stand elsewhere. On this occasion I confidently hoped they would unanimously return me. The Government would hesitate to continue a policy thus proved to be so repellent to Englishmen of all parties. I was returned unopposed.

Even supposing the Chinese Labour plan to have been excellent in every way, it was an impossible platform for any man to stand on as a main issue, quite apart from the party prejudice that had been imported into the controversy. At the London meeting, to which I have referred, men of great eminence and of all parties had denounced the proposal in such emphatic and scathing terms that no candidate would have had the remotest chance of election. Indeed, when the General Election came it is worthy of note that wherever Captain Creswell went—and, having come from South Africa for the purpose, he went about the country to numberless meetings—he was received with acclamation, and in almost every case where he had spoken the candidate he supported was returned.

I should like to record two things on this subject. The first is that throughout this time of acute bitterness my friendship with Alfred Lyttelton was never impaired in the slightest degree. We continued to play golf together and dine together in the height of the controversy, and I learnt to love and admire him more and more. The second is that in all my political life I never felt so deeply on any subject, was never so convinced of the wrong in the thing which I was opposing, and that should a similar issue ever be raised again I would willingly sacrifice everything in order to defeat such a plan.

Having been duly elected I returned to the House of

Commons and was introduced by my brother, the Member for Lincoln, and by Mr. Arthur Elliot, who had resigned his position in the Government as Financial Secretary, as a protest against the Protectionist leanings of the Unionist Party.

There was a tremendous ovation, no doubt largely due to the disinterested and high-minded action of Mr. Arthur Elliot in resigning on a point of principle. He was very lame and could not lead an active life, except as a Member of Parliament. He had shown high qualities in the House, and had at last been appointed Financial Secretary—a sure stepping-stone to Cabinet rank. But he sacrificed the whole of his ambitions and his life's work for his belief in Free Trade. When I returned to the House after shaking hands with the speaker, I took my seat with the "Unionist Free Traders," as they were called, amidst renewed cheers, led by Mr. Churchill. Shortly afterwards, in spite of persistent and growing opposition, both in the House and in the country, the Chinese Labour Ordinance received the consent of Parliament, and very soon the first batch of Chinese coolies entered South Africa. In accordance with my promise I crossed the floor to the Liberal side.

I resigned my membership of the Carlton Club by letter, enclosing my usual subscription to the servants' fund. To my surprise I received a most kind and courteous letter of regret from the Committee. Indeed, throughout this time the strange thing to me was that, although I had been such a thorn in the side of the Conservative Party, the individual members both of the Government and the rank and file continued to show me the greatest kindness and goodwill. On the other hand, I received a considerable number of violent letters, signed and anonymous. Life has always been to me a glorious adventure, and, above all, great fun, but I remember that, just for once, I had a shiver of discomfort when, on returning very tired from the House of Commons late one evening, I opened a letter in a very cultivated handwriting, which ran as follows:

Sir,

This is to inform me that three men who have read your speeches and observed your actions about the necessary importation of Chinese labour in order to save the South African Gold industry, meet together each evening, and pray sincerely to God that his curse may rest upon you, your wife, and your children.

(Signed) Three Ruined Shareholders.

The rest of the session of 1904 was marked by continuous debates on the Fiscal question. Mr. Chamberlain conducted his "Raging, tearing propaganda" campaign with extraordinary vigour. We Free Traders thought his only mistake in a series of most brilliant speeches was, when at Glasgow, he emphasised the financial advantages of his proposal to the business men of the country. Of course, he sincerely believed that this was true, but it brought the controversy down to a less exalted level. So long as the main theme was "Imperial Unity," regardless of financial advantage, he was on far safer ground with the British electorate. In my experience, the least effective appeal to the British elector is an appeal to his pocket, while the most telling is an appeal to his patriotism and his ideals.

I was asked to stand for several constituencies, and finally accepted the invitation of the Abercromby Division of Liverpool. At the same time Mr. Churchill accepted the invitation of the Liberals of North-West Manchester.

The Abercromby Division was composed of two very opposite sections of class and opinion. It included the University, most of the doctors, the big shops and offices, the headquarters of nearly all the great shipping companies, and a considerable residential quarter. The great majority of these voters were extreme Protestants and Anti-Home Rulers. On the other hand, there was another part of the constituency which included the most dreadful slums I have ever seen, now happily swept away, mostly inhabited by Catholic Irish Home Rulers. I well remember my adoption meeting, which was held in a cold, bare,

ground-floor room. My Chairman, Mr. Burton Eills, afterwards Lord Mayor of Liverpool, introduced me to the meeting in laudatory words, saying that their candidate was a man who would always put country before party, and that I had the support not only of the leading Protestants, but also of the redoubtable Mr. T. P. O'Connor, member for the adjoining constituency. I proceeded to expound my views at great length on the Chinese Labour and Fiscal questions to a quiet but bored audience. Then I said: "I now come to a question on which it is not possible for me to give you such definite assurances, for it must depend on the form of Home Rule which it is proposed to give Ireland." At that moment the electric light went out, and every effort to restore it was unsuccessful; nor could candles be found, and the rest of the business had to be carried on by striking matches. When we had come to almost the last match, I was adopted unanimously. To this day I do not know who turned the lights out and hid away the matches, but, anyway, the result to me was satisfactory. All this was in January, 1905, and from then onwards I spent all my spare time in Liverpool, prosecuting what appeared to be a really forlorn hope. The electorate was quite small, between five and six thousand being the largest poll to be expected, and my chairman insisted on the exhausting task of a personal canvas. I said I made it a rule never to ask anyone for his vote—a rule to which I have rigidly adhered with one single exception—but my chairman said: "At least, you can shake hands with five thousand people, and they will be more likely to vote for you after they have seen you." In vain I protested that the opposite effect might be produced; my chairman was adamant, and round the constituency we went. By the time the Election came I had personally seen and shaken hands with about two-thirds of the electorate. It may or may not have contributed to my success, but it did have one undoubted effect on my life. I learnt for the first time how really bad slums could be. Those poor people in the Catholic quarter were living

in cellars and tiny rooms. Often a man, a woman and three small children in a room ten feet square, almost quite dark except on the brightest day. Consumption and other diseases were rife. The wages of the dock labourers were precarious, and often two-thirds of what they earned went to the adjoining public-house. I made friends with the then Bishop of Liverpool and the medical officer of health, and together we vowed not to rest until we had got rid of such awful conditions.

After I had been elected I gave what energies and time I could spare to a campaign for getting rid of these slums. This cost me a great many votes, and undoubtedly contributed to my defeat in 1910; but it helped in some degree to further the cause, which was in the end successful. It seems to me that herein lies the true merit of what is called democratic government. The process of choosing people by counting heads and then setting them to make laws is, of course, in theory, a ridiculous method of procedure. I suppose that is why democratic government shows signs of gradually disappearing from the Continent of Europe. But even if it is an absurd plan for the making of laws, it has, on the other hand, overwhelming advantages. The first is that it compels the man who seeks to enter Parliament to make personal acquaintance with the real life of the poor, and thus to understand them and to sympathise with them. The second is that it provides a dignified forum, where grievances can be ventilated; the humblest subject can get redress from the High Court of Parliament, if his member has the nerve to ask a question, to move the adjournment, to take a deputation to the Minister, or to employ any of the many ways in which a resolute member of the House of Commons can throw light on dark places and see justice done.

CHAPTER VIII

General Election — "Left Outside" — Campbell-Bannerman's Ministry—A Rejected Amendment—Birrell, Masterman and Education—German Manœuvres—The Kaiser and the State of the Army.

As the year 1905 drew to a close, political activity became intense. The contrast between the Election of January, 1906, and that which is proceeding now, as I write, is so extraordinary that it is difficult to believe that we are going through the same process. Then, every great hall was filled to overflowing on most days of the week. It was only necessary to announce that a meeting would be held in any place for the numbers to be so great, whether it was in a town or a village that there was sure to be a large overflow meeting outside. Now, in great parts of the country, halls, big and little, are almost empty, and the vast majority of the people one meets care not a jot which side gets in. Perhaps this is all to the good. The spirit of the League of Nations is at last spreading to one's own country. For it is no doubt true that you cannot have peace and conciliation abroad until you begin to get some measure of it at home. But at the time of which I speak, in the winter of December, 1905, and January, 1906, there was no peace and no conciliation. On the Liberal side, Asquith, Campbell-Bannerman, Edward Grey, Lloyd George and Churchill were doughty antagonists. The Conservatives were much less well equipped with one exception. The exception was, of course, F. E. Smith. He was then seen to be what he still remains, the most powerful platform orator in the country.

It was during the Liverpool campaign that I first formed the close friendship with him, which I rejoice to think survives

unimpaired to this day. We would denounce each other's policy in unmeasured terms every night from different platforms in the great City of Liverpool, and afterwards we would continue the denunciation over the supper-table in the Adelphi Hotel. I have often heard people, who do not understand these things, say what humbugs public men must be if they can condemn each other in public and promptly dine together in amity after. This is a complete delusion. The most uncompromising and the most genuine conflict of opinion may well coincide with the most perfect friendship. Here was a case in point; if ever a man believed sincerely in a party and a cause, F. E. Smith believed in his party and Tariff Reform. I was equally sincere in my belief that the Tariff Reform plan would ruin England and destroy the Empire; but knowing this we liked each other all the better because of the frankness of our disagreement.

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman came down to Liverpool just before the Election and addressed a great meeting at the Sun Hall. I moved the principal resolution which, I remember, was seconded by Sir John Brunner. Brunner had a curious and fanatical objection to a large navy, a point of view which I could not in the least understand, but he was in many ways a great man and a strong Free Trader. The meeting was a huge success, and I covered C.-B. with praise. After the meeting he said such cordial things to me that I had visions of walking straight into his Cabinet. As the sequel showed, he really held no such views.

Meantime, at Manchester, Winston Churchill was conducting a really wonderful Free Trade campaign. Of course, Manchester was the home of Free Trade, but making all allowances for that fact, it is nevertheless true that Churchill's achievement at this Election in winning votes for Free Trade, not only in Manchester, but throughout the country, was one of the most remarkable electoral performances of our time.

And so to the Election, when the Conservatives suffered a

debâcle, the like of which no one had foreseen. Mr. Churchill was returned with a great majority. I scraped in by one hundred and ninety-nine out of a poll of five thousand seven hundred. Mr. Asquith, who had borne the lion's share in countering Mr. Chamberlain's campaign throughout the country, sent me a particularly cordial telegram of congratulations; Churchill telegraphed: "Bravo, Jack. The rest is easy." The Liberals won several seats in Liverpool and the neighbourhood, but I could not help rejoicing that my friend F. E. Smith was returned. It would have been a disaster to our public life if he had failed to secure election to the House of Commons.

And so we all returned to London, and watched C.-B. making his Cabinet. We knew a good deal of what was going on between him, Asquith, Haldane and Grey. Several of us would meet together every night for dinner, wondering which of us would next be asked to join the Ministry. Lloyd George, Churchill, John Burns, and one or two others were of our party. It was like the children's rhyme about the little nigger boys; one by one they went off to their different offices, till finally, as in the rhyme, "Then there was one," that one being myself. I was frankly furious, but life was such fun that it did not prevent me from enjoying my own discomfiture. Two days after the Government was finally formed I happened to meet Mr. Balfour walking across the Horse Guards' Parade. For two years past he had been good enough to dine with me each session with Churchill, George Wyndham, Alfred Lyttelton, Ian Malcolm, Hugh Cecil and one or two others. In spite of acute political differences, he had always shown me great personal kindness. He hailed me with a smile, and we walked along together. I said how grieved I was, like everyone else, that he had been defeated at Manchester. He laughed, and said: "We must take these things as they come." He then said: "I observe, my dear Jack Seely, that C.-B. has not included you in his Government. I confess that this surprises me. I wonder

to what political group you will now belong; perhaps the Outside Left." I replied: "Oh no, sir, a more formidable party, the left outside." Mr. Balfour said: "That is the best thing you have ever said." With a kindly smile he walked up the steps of the Travellers' Club and waved his hand to me as he went in. He was, indeed, a serene and undaunted figure, far greater in defeat than in victory.

Shortly after the session opened I put down an amendment to reduce the army by ten thousand men, in order to call attention to various military defects which had not been remedied. This I had done in the two previous sessions when Mr. Balfour was Prime Minister. Briefly, I was determined to focus attention on the failure of the military authorities to realize and act upon the lessons which South Africa and common sense had taught me. Mr. Haldane, who had become Secretary of State for War, whom I was ultimately to succeed, and with whom I was already on terms of close friendship, said that he had not had time to go into the questions raised. The debate went on until the evening when C.-B. got up and made a conciliatory speech, and asked me to withdraw my motion. I did not see how I could do this, because I had said exactly the same things in two previous years; I had had a no more satisfactory reply, and as I had insisted on a division on the previous occasions, how could I fail to force a division on this? The army had nothing to do with politics; why should a change from a Conservative to a Liberal administration affect the military point raised? But all doubts were soon set at rest; the Chief Whip, Mr. Whiteley (afterwards Lord Marchamley), who was a very blunt man, came and sat down next to me on the front bench below the gangway, just before the debate ended, and held out dire threats of political excommunication and other horrors if I did not withdraw the motion. In his justifiable anger and excitement he said something about expelling me from the Party, to which I am afraid I replied, in a voice which was heard all over the House, that

he could go to the nether regions and take his party with him. And so to a division. Fifty-six stalwart friends voted in my lobby, while the whole of the rest of the House of Commons voted the other way.

Within two years I was sitting on the Government Bench, having to meet attacks instead of making them. But I can honestly say that I had no idea in my mind that by attacking the Government I could induce them to include me in their number. Indeed, the exact opposite was the case. I said to myself as I walked home that night: "Well, there is no hope for me. I have defied the Prime Minister, even when he has gone out of his way to make it easy for me to retreat." From that time onwards I knew that C.-B. would never include me in his Government, and I decided that it was more interesting, and more useful, to pursue an independent line than to endeavour to placate the powers that were.

For the benefit of those who may read this book and may contemplate a Parliamentary career—the most adventurous career open to any man—I venture to record this opinion. Once you have put your name to any proposal in the House of Commons on any serious question of controversy, never withdraw, whatever the promises, cajoleries or threats, unless the Government of the day make complete surrender. It is not quite what the classical pundits call "*In pari materia*," but it is a similar proposition to that propounded to me by a very eminent man; he said: "One simple rule of life is: Always do when you are sober what you promised to do when you were drunk." When I answered: "Would not that be very inconvenient?" He replied: "No, because once you have made that resolve, you will never get drunk." In the same way if you make up your mind to go through to the end with every motion you make in the House of Commons, the instinct of self-preservation will prevent you from putting anything down, unless you really mean it and are prepared to support it to the end. In this particular case it was easy for me, because

I did care deeply for army reform. I had seen the dead hand of officialdom ruining the careers of men, spoiling the chances of victory; giving hard times to the wounded, all because dull but well-meaning people had written dull but well-meaning books, which became the ark of the covenant, to question the truth of which was *lèse-majesté*. With all my manifold faults I believe that I am not a bitter man; yet I had written the most bitter things on this subject in my letters from South Africa, and had said them in the House of Commons, at the Royal United Service Institution and on the platform. In this particular case, therefore, no honest man could have withdrawn; but, even where there is no such obligation of honour I am sure the political rule I have propounded always holds good.

After this army debate I became involved in a less exciting controversy, denominational versus undenominational education. Mr. Birrell, in some ways the most brilliant man in the Government, had been appointed Education Minister. As all Education Ministers do, for some reason which I cannot fathom, but which seems invariable, he introduced an Education Bill. The procedure in the Conservative Government had been the same and I had taken some part in the debates. I was, therefore, familiar with the controversy, and, moreover, had a new interest, in that my present constituency comprised both Catholics and, what are termed by their opponents, "Black Protestants." Amongst my intimate friends was Charles Masterman, and together, to use Mr. Birrell's own phrase, "We set about him." The House of Commons greatly enjoyed the controversy, not in the least for anything that was said by me, although I initiated some of the debates, but because Mr. Birrell had a combination of wit, humour and sincerity which was a joy to all who heard him. Masterman was a worthy antagonist, with deep religious convictions. But, as in every case but one in my Parliamentary life, acute political controversy only strengthened personal friendship. Birrell, Masterman and I were always firm friends.

But all the time I was thinking of what we called "Army Reform"—the getting rid of the stranglehold of red tape: the provision of quick-firing artillery, more machine-guns, improved rifle shooting, more mobile troops, the putting of greater trust in the auxiliary forces and the intelligence of the average man. All these things filled my mind, and really, though I did not know it, directed my activities.

After my annual yeomanry training was over I conceived the idea of going to the German manœuvres. Having seen the smallest European army—the Swiss—I longed for the chance of seeing the biggest army—the German. Haldane agreed, and Edward Grey arranged everything for me. It would have been of little good to go as a yeomanry officer on the regular reserve, as I then was, for I should have been towed about at the tail-end of an immense concourse of superior officers from every army in the world. So I went as a civilian member of the House of Commons interested in military affairs. One of my intimate friends from my Cambridge days was A. C. Hall, the owner of Six Mile Bottom, near Newmarket, renowned for the partridge shooting, long rented by the Duke of Cambridge. He was a major in the Militia, had concluded his training and had time to spare; so I arranged that he should come with me. And together we went, as tourists accompanied by our wives, to a place near to where the manœuvres were to begin. Then followed a time of quite extraordinary interest.

We received an invitation to accompany a German brigade which was advancing towards the scene of the grand manœuvres. The brigade was commanded by Colonel von Jacobi, a tall, spare man, who was a large landowner in East Prussia. I learnt that he was a soldier well regarded in official circles, also that he was what was termed a "Flügel adjutant" of the Kaiser. I believe he commanded a German corps on the Eastern Front during the World War with distinction and success. We joined them on the line of march at the beginning of their concentration, and accompanied them for days on end.

The first thing that struck us was the distance that they could march. During the march they practised attacks, rearguard actions, the repulse of flank attacks and every kind of military manœuvre, and yet they would cover thirty kilometres in a day. It is well known that the British Army hates long marches, although when need be they have marched further than most. But in peace, no wise general ever asks our infantry to walk very far. It was astonishing to see those docile Germans covering such distances without a murmur, with equipment heavier than ours.

I had heard a good deal about Prussian and German discipline being enforced by the brutality of their superiors, especially by the non-commissioned officers. I watched for symptoms of this, and found the case quite the contrary; towards the end of the day, again and again, I found corporals, sergeants, and sometimes officers carrying rifles and equipment for exhausted soldiers under their command. There was a spirit of fervent Germanic patriotism, and much real camaraderie throughout the manœuvres and marches. But on the other hand, when it came to the sham-fights of this little force, the proceedings were farcical—no other word can describe the episodes which I saw. A hundred men, who were posted invisibly on the edge of a wood, would fire a few blank cartridges to indicate their presence as enemy; an equal number from the main body would then be ordered to attack. They would spread out to four paces' interval, march forward a hundred yards, fire a few rounds, walk forward another hundred yards. By this time, having started from three hundred yards' distance they would be a hundred yards from the enemy. Encouraging shouts and whistles would then proclaim the final attack, and the hundred men would stand up, walk forward seventy yards, run the last thirty with a shout of victory, and the impartial umpire would declare that the enemy were demolished, and that the attackers had won the day. Of course, it was obvious to anyone who had ever been in action

with smokeless powder, that in the first advance twenty men would have been hit; in the second at least forty, and, if with sublime courage, the remaining forty walked forward the whole lot would quite easily have been killed.

At the end of the brigade march there was a pow-wow, as we then called it, of all the officers. Every single one of these little battles had been faithfully recorded in detail. Every officer and many non-commissioned officers were ordered to give their accounts of what took place. The proceedings lasted three hours or more. Everyone concerned in each particular discussion had to remain standing, so that the great majority of the officers stood erect in the hot sun for the whole time. I sat down in the shade of a small tree, and, although I was extraordinarily interested, I ultimately fell asleep. My excuse must be that I had been riding about since five in the morning, and it was then nearly one o'clock.

I was awakened by Colonel von Jacobi, who told the company that they had with them a civilian who had been through a portion of the South African War. He then invited me to address them. The temptation to tell them the truth—to proclaim that their tactics must mean the loss of hundreds of thousands of men, if ever they went to war with a civilised enemy with even a spark of intelligence—was almost overwhelming. I had little time to think, but, as everyone will appreciate, I thought of about five different reasons for saying nothing on that subject. So I just told them how greatly impressed I had been by their marching powers, and by their wonderful supply arrangements, enabling them to give hot food to their troops at the end of each day's march, even when the exigencies of the manœuvres had taken them far away from the roads proposed; that my experience in South Africa had taught me the extreme difficulties of supply and transport, and that my friend and I were most grateful to them, and especially to Colonel von Jacobi for his kindness in permitting us to accompany them. We returned to our billets and the brigade

moved on to take part in the grand manœuvres on the Grosse Sand at Frankfort, where the Kaiser was to take supreme command.

I said good-bye to von Jacobi's brigade with much regret. The officers were rigid, but amiable. At first they were highly suspicious of two Englishmen in plain clothes, but after many days of riding about together, they became quite friendly. It was obvious that they were preparing for a fresh trial of strength, with the French and Russians as their enemies. It was equally clear that they did not take our army very seriously as a potential enemy, because of our small numbers, and that their rigid system inclined them to rule out everything except regular troops. But it was evident that they were thinking all the time about our Navy. Except for a brief period during and after dinner they were intensely serious, and concentrated upon the future war, which alone could give Germany her "place in the sun."

A few days later, very early in the morning, I attended the grand finale of the manœuvres. The approach marches of the troops were admirably conducted, and by eight o'clock in the morning the stage was set for the grand battle. Then came the most ridiculous sham-fight that I have ever seen; this is saying a great deal, because all sham-fights must be ludicrous, as their name implies. At first I thought that the whole thing was not meant seriously, was merely staged to amuse the spectators. But the officer who had been specially detailed to accompany me by the German General Staff—Pagenstecker was his name, a near kinsman of the world-famous oculist—convinced me that this was not so. Indeed, going about amongst the troops as they were preparing for the attack, I saw that they were in deadly earnest. This is what happened. A vast mass of infantry, composed of many infantry divisions at full strength, were assembled in woods and shallow ravines on the edge of a broad, flat, sandy plain—reminding one of the long valley at Aldershot. At the far end of this plain, less than a

mile away, was posted an enemy in concealed positions on a low ridge of sand-hills. I was informed that as the enemy were inferior in numbers to the attacking force by about fifty per cent, the attack would certainly succeed. But on inquiry I also learnt not only had the enemy posted machine-guns in the centre and on both flanks, but also a number of field batteries.

There was a long wait of about an hour, during which the Kaiser, who was umpire-in-chief, rode from one side to the other with his staff. He said "Good-morning" to us as he passed, and hoped we had had an interesting time. I employed the interval of waiting, in having a look at the Kaiser's spare horses. One was the famous white Arab, given him by Abdul Hamid on the occasion of his recent visit to Constantinople and the Holy Land. I induced the groom, who was in charge of this horse, to allow me to go for a ride on it. I have ridden horses in almost every country in Europe, and in some countries in every Continent, and I can truly say that this was the most perfect of them all. In appearance and manners, in courage and docility combined, he was, indeed, perfect. Unfortunately the Kaiser perceived me cantering him in and out of the trees, enjoying the superb manner in which he changed legs at every bend. He rode up and expressed his displeasure in extremely unparliamentary language. I thoroughly deserved his censure, but pleaded overwhelming temptation as an excuse. The reason for his exceptional anger will appear presently.

All at once the bugles sounded, and the grand attack began. It was a thrilling spectacle to see those columns debouch from the woods. They were fine young men and smart officers. In front of each regiment was carried a curious apparatus like a great candelabra, with little tinkling bells, which corresponds somewhat in the German Army to our regimental colours. But oh, the folly of the whole proceeding. The enemy guns thundered out, the machine-guns rattled, and there was a deafening sound of rifle-fire as the columns proceeded to spread out for the attack. Had there been real bullets and real

shells, after making allowance for the fact that casualties are always far less from a given volume of fire than anyone expects, I am certain that one-half the force would have been killed and wounded in the first five minutes. But, there being no bullets or shells, the vast concourse, in rigid lines, moved resolutely forward within a few hundred yards of the enemy positions. Then came a most picturesque climax, which our English observers thought the most fantastic proceeding of all, but which, I am sure, was the only episode in the battle which had the remotest chance of success. The Kaiser, on the famous white Arab, swiftly changed himself from umpire-in-chief into the cavalry commander of the attacking side. At the head of a cloud of horsemen—the flower of the German cavalry—he swept along the enemy line; at the same moment the attacking infantry dashed forward with loud cheers, and the battle was won.

A grand march past followed, the Emperor taking the salute; impressive, indeed it was. First came the Cavalry of the Guard, magnificently mounted on heavy horses. Then came the light cavalry. To my surprise, not only were their horses excellent, but the men rode well, the officers were all thin, spare men, with good seats in the saddle. The heavy cavalry were very heavy, especially some of their officers. Then came the artillery, and then long, long lines of infantry. It was very dusty and hot, yet not a man fell out, as far as I could see.

I rode back alone to the railway station, where I was to leave my horse, thinking deeply of the extraordinary scene I had witnessed, and wondering whether I should ever see Germans in action. Little did I think that eight years later I was to see again and again the serried masses of German infantry being mowed down by rifle-fire. Little did I dream that I, myself in November, 1914, at Ypres, should be joining in the deadly shooting of those resolute men, advancing with bowed heads, in a snowstorm to inevitable death.

I wrote a confidential report of my visit to Lord Haldane,

embodying what I have here written. I said that this was, without doubt, the most formidable fighting machine in the world. I said that their ridiculous attacks would cost them tens of thousands of lives in the opening stages of any war. But, I added, that they would learn their lesson in time, and would have wit enough to change their methods. At my first interview with Sir John French, when I became Secretary of State for War, he said, with a smile: "I have here a most interesting report on the Germany Army, I wonder if you would care to see it." He then produced my report.

CHAPTER IX

*Haldane and the Territorials—Death of C.-B.—Under-Secretary for the Colonies—Honesty of Politicians—Edward VII and the South African Bill—Privy Councillor 1909—First Minister to Fly—
“Government of Worse Men.”*

EXCEPT for this holiday at the German manœuvres my life at this time was busy in the extreme. I had been appointed one of the four chairmen of Private Bill Committees, and it so happened that throughout the greater part of the session my committee was sitting. The chairman of a Private Bill Committee of the House of Commons has an arduous time. The greatest barristers of the day argue before the Committee, and if the chairman lets his attention flag for a minute these acute men are quick to spot the fact and take advantage of it in the interest of their clients.

Balfour Browne constantly appeared before me. He was the most successful of all the men at the Parliamentary Bar in those days, and I have been told that his income at that time averaged between thirty and forty thousand a year.

A wrong decision by a chairman may cause infinite dislocation of the business of great municipal corporations; the decision is final and cannot be reversed. But these Committees form a good tribunal. In my “twenty-five years’ experience of the House of Commons, on only one occasion has their absolute integrity been questioned, although the sums involved are very great. On that one occasion the accusation was promptly proved to be baseless, and an abject apology was made.

In addition to this work came other work of an even more exacting and congenial kind. Mr. Haldane took many months of patient labour to think out his plan before propounding his

great scheme of Army Reform. Lord Haig's eloquent appreciation of his services in this regard, on the occasion of Lord Haldane's death, is fresh in everyone's memory.

For the purpose of organising the Yeomanry and Volunteers into an army complete in all its parts—Artillery, Cavalry, Infantry, Engineers, and Army Service Corps—he set up a committee which was nicknamed the "Duma" after the first Russian democratic assembly. Lord Roberts was the first chairman, but after a short time he resigned because he conceived it his duty to continue to work for universal compulsory service. Lord Esher took his place, and I was appointed vice-chairman. We had many meetings, and divided ourselves up into sub-committees, on many of which I served. It was very hard work, but we all knew that it was worth any amount of trouble.

The Territorial Force was founded first, last and all the time, on a county basis. I am sure this was very wise, for county patriotism is a real and abiding thing, far more so, I believe, in England than in any other country in the world.

One curious coincidence is that I was then, perhaps wrongly, much opposed to the appointment of Lords Lieutenant of counties as ex-officio presidents of county associations. I was overruled. Ten years later I found myself the ex-officio president of the Territorial Army Association of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight—a position which I still hold.

At last the work was done, and the Territorial Army began its career. Haldane had the remarkable gift of getting the soldiers, with few exceptions, to agree with him and believe in him. He used to tell the House of Commons that his scheme was really the soldiers' scheme. But the leading soldiers of that time have told me that in all its main essentials it was the product of his own acute brain. He was, however, the first to admit to me on many occasions that he could never have persuaded the soldiers to agree to his scheme without the practical demonstrations, which forced the more open-minded soldiers, however unwillingly, to realize the possibilities of a

non-professional Army of all arms, if properly organized. Perhaps I may be forgiven, as a Hampshire man and His Majesty's Lieutenant for that county, if I here place on record the fact that amongst those who took a leading part in advice and counsel many were Hampshire men. Sir Harry Crichton, commanding the Hampshire Volunteer Brigade; Colonel Le Roy Lewis, commanding the Hampshire Yeomanry and on the Staff for Yeomanry at the War Office; Sir Thomas Sturmy Cave, now the oldest commissioned officer, except H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, in the British Army; and my old friend and disciple Bobby Johnson.

Meantime, domestic affliction had fallen with a heavy hand upon C.-B. His wife, to whom he was passionately devoted, fell dangerously ill. She suffered greatly, and could not sleep except when he was quite near her. This gallant old man, while bearing the burden of the most exacting post in the world, would sit up nearly all night holding her hand. Of course, it told upon his health, and after his wife died he fell desperately ill. In 1908, after two troubled years as Prime Minister, he died. They were troubled years for many reasons. His majority was much too big, so his force lost cohesion. He, himself, though possessed of almost all the great qualities—patriotism, devotion to duty, loyalty, shrewdness—yet lacked the one essential for a Prime Minister of England—quickness of thought, in speech and in debate. He was no match for Mr. Balfour. Not in the least that Mr. Balfour took advantage of his slowness to trip him up unfairly; that was not the case. But, when in the course of debate Mr. Balfour's penetrating mind had discerned the truth of the matter, C.-B. was not quick enough to appreciate the fact. In a few moments the House would be convinced that Mr. Balfour was right, much as they would have preferred that it should have been otherwise; still C.-B. did not see the point, while realising that he was losing the support of his followers. Mr. Balfour had prophesied all this to me when C.-B. first took

office. He had great admiration for him as a brother Scot, and wished him well. But this is what he said: "In spite of all his manifold merits I tell you, here and now, he is not strong enough for the place." "In body?" I asked. "Oh no," he said, "I hope he will maintain his robust health for many a day. No, in quickness of mind." And so it turned out. Without doubt, it was this particular difficulty that worried him to his end.

He was succeeded by Mr. Asquith, who had been for two years Chancellor of the Exchequer. Asquith had none of C.-B.'s worries, for in debate he was the equal, if not the superior, of Mr. Balfour, and, indeed, of everyone else in the House. He made certain changes in his Government; one of which affected me. Lord Elgin had been Secretary of State for the Colonies, with Churchill as his Under-Secretary of State in the House of Commons. It had not been a completely harmonious combination, and apart from this aspect of the matter, Lord Elgin was frankly tired of the job. So he retired, and Lord Crewe took his place. Mr. Churchill was made President of the Board of Trade, and I went to the Colonial Office as Under-Secretary of State, and the representative of that great department in the House of Commons. I still remember, as who would not, Mr. Asquith sending for me to his house in Cavendish Square. My father drove me there, and waited at the corner of the Square to hear the result of our interview. Great was his joy when I told him the news.

During our conversation, Mr. Asquith said that my friendship with General Botha might make things easier in dealing with the South African problem. He promised to help me in every way in a difficult task. It is impossible to imagine a more wonderful chief with whom to work. One of his most remarkable qualities was his power to get to the root of a matter with unerring instinct. I remember telling him one evening that I had had prepared a document, on a subject of unusual

importance, on which his decision was necessary. There were problems of great complexity, involving diplomatic difficulties of the highest importance. He said he would deal with the question without delay, but that the only moment would be just after dinner; would I dine alone with him at 10, Downing Street? This I did, and throughout a short dinner, he talked with charming directness on every kind of subject. As soon as coffee had been brought, he said: "Now for the document." I see him still, bending over the paper and turning the eight foolscap pages rapidly, one after the other; then he sat back and remained quite still for not more than two minutes. He again referred to the document, and made pencil-marks in the margin of four or five pages. Then with amazing lucidity he pointed out the one feature on which everything else turned. There were three possible courses, each with its drawbacks, some of which none of us had foreseen. With emphasis, but in the simplest words, he summed up the advantage to be gained by one of the three, and said: "That is what we must do. Do you agree?" I replied "Yes," for, indeed, his logic was convincing, and, as the event proved, he was perfectly right.

At the end he said to me: "It is interesting that people constantly say that Prime Ministers usually take the wrong course in this sort of matter. But so often all courses are bad; all one can do is to reject the worst, and choose the one that is least bad."

When I joined the Government, in addition to all the departmental work of a minister in the Colonial Office and in the House of Commons, there was imposed upon me, by the Prime Minister, work on the Committee of Imperial Defence as important as it was secret. For more than six years this work went on, and ever grew in volume, until finally I was chairman of five sub-committees dealing with war problems.

This would seem an appropriate moment to venture my observations on English politics and English politicians: It is a cant saying that political life is a "dirty game." Certainly I have never found it so. It is the greatest, and in all essentials,

the most straightforward. In the course of my life I have lived on terms of intimacy with soldiers, sailors and lawyers, as these pages show; I have been treated by all these three classes of men with a kindness far beyond my deserts. Nevertheless, though it may surprise my readers, I say with all confidence that I have found more straightforward and honourable dealing amongst politicians than amongst any other body of men. Nor is this surprising when one comes to think it over. Englishmen of all classes hate humbugs—the only class of men they do hate. They will forgive a man anything, unless he be a cheat and a sneak. As a consequence, few men of that sort have a chance of being chosen as candidates for any constituency. Thus by all this sifting and winnowing process, a body of men singularly free from humbug is elected to the House of Commons. But there is more in it than this. A great man once said that “the House of Commons as a whole is more generous than the most generous man in it, and wiser than the wisest man in it.” When a man gets there, unless he is peculiarly foolish, it soon dawns on him that it is hopeless for him to try to deceive them, or pretend to be other than he is. I have rarely seen the attempt made, and it has always failed.

As to generosity, the following is a good instance: A member, with a great practice at the Bar, indulged in a wild speculation on a large scale; it went wrong. Bankruptcy, and, therefore, complete ruin of his career at the Bar, stared him in the face. A House of Commons acquaintance, who found this out, set to work to raise a sufficient fund to pay off the debt, and save the bankruptcy. I remember subscribing a comparatively small sum myself. But in spite of every effort this friend found there was still a large sum needed. Although he had nothing but his earnings, he provided this considerable sum, and the brilliant gambler was saved. Will it be believed, that this man, who impoverished himself to save the other, was not only a political opponent, but was himself entirely dependent on his earnings at the Bar, and the man whom he thus saved

was one of his most formidable rivals, so that without doubt his fall would have added greatly to the other's income. It was, indeed, a generous act.

Taking office for the first time is a great adventure. Not only do you find yourself the criticised, instead of the critic, not only are you engaged in constructive work of real importance from the first moment, but you are introduced into an entirely new atmosphere, the Civil Service. I was peculiarly fortunate. My Parliamentary Chief, Lord Crewe, was a man of outstanding quality of heart and brain, and, on the permanent side, the head of the office, Sir Francis Hopwood, now Lord Southborough, was a man who, more and more, kings and governments came to trust, so that as time went on he played a leading part in almost every great event affecting the country and the Empire.

It was when I went to the Colonial Office that I first met the man who was destined to become my greatest friend since the death of Tom Conolly. The Master of Elibank came to me just after I was appointed, and told me that a young connexion of his, George Nicholson—the son of Sir Charles Nicholson, one of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and a well-known member of the House of Commons—had been private secretary to Mr. Edmund Robertson when Civil Lord of the Admiralty, and had shown high qualities in that capacity. So he became my private secretary, though not a Civil Servant. On the advice of Sir Francis Hopwood I appointed R. V. Vernon—who has since held many responsible posts at home and abroad with distinction, and of recent years was financial adviser to the Government of Iraq—as my private secretary in the Civil Service. He was the embodiment of method and caution. During the four years I was at the Colonial Office, he not only helped me in all constructive work, but saved me from innumerable errors. Finally, I was fortunate in securing my erstwhile political opponent, Godfrey Baring, as my Parliamentary Private Secretary.

George Nicholson had every one of the great qualities, loyalty, devotion, unselfishness; add to that a happy disposition, the ability and the willingness to work for sixteen hours a day, an almost uncanny gift for placating the angry Cabinet Minister, or Member of Parliament, by speech, interview or letter, and it will be realised how fortunate I was in having such a man to help me. But if this combination of talents in my colleagues at the Colonial Office was fortunate for myself, it so happens it was extremely fortunate for the State; for while I was in that great office events of far-reaching importance came up for decision. First, the South African settlement. During Campbell-Bannerman's administration Home Rule had been given to the Transvaal. Lord Milner, the Governor-General, was averse to taking this step so soon, and, as a consequence, the Conservative Party in the House of Commons, and in the House of Lords, were not prepared to agree to it. Our great majority in the House of Commons would have enabled us to pass an act through that House, but it would certainly have been rejected in the House of Lords. The expedient was, therefore, resorted to of giving self-government to the Transvaal by Order-in-Council and Letters Patent under the Great Seal. This was a strictly legal course for various technical reasons, and there were precedents for it. Churchill had expounded the policy to the House of Commons in a speech which seemed to us Liberals both eloquent and convincing, but it enraged the Conservative Party. Indeed, Mr. Balfour, as Leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons, said that his party would have neither part nor lot in this rash experiment. It was clear that any settlement in South Africa, or in any of the Dominions, based on the approval of only one party in the State, was foredoomed to ultimate failure. The problem then was to secure a settlement, giving the same full powers of self-government to all parts of South Africa as had been given to the Transvaal, with the approval of both great parties in the British State. To that end we devoted ourselves unceasingly.

The matter was urgent for many reasons. To my mind, the two chief reasons were: Firstly, the devoted loyalty and friendship of General Botha, a man of outstanding quality and overwhelming influence with the Dutch in South Africa. George Wyndham said to me soon after I had taken office: "I think you will succeed with your South African Settlement, because Botha happened to be born just at the right time." The second reason was that I had been forced to the conclusion that war with Germany must come in the near future. If war came with a hostile population in South Africa, not only would all chance of a settlement be postponed for a generation, but the Empire would be confronted with immense strategical difficulties. It is difficult to apportion justly the praise due to those who were concerned in securing the settlement, which successfully withstood the tremendous repercussions of the World War. It was achieved by the courage of Campbell-Bannerman and Churchill in taking the first step by giving Home Rule to the Transvaal; by the patience of Lord Crewe; the determination of Mr. Asquith; the generous support of Mr. Balfour, Alfred Lyttelton, George Wyndham, F. E. Smith, and many other leading Conservatives. Above all, by the wisdom and knowledge of Sir Francis Hopwood. But if I were asked to name one man who had the most decisive influence, without doubt I should name Edward VII. He set his heart upon a settlement, and used all his prestige and power to secure it. I saw him on many occasions at this time, and the first question he always asked was as to the progress of South African peace. When the South African Bill was due to become law, he arranged to give a small luncheon at Buckingham Palace to the delegates, Botha, Steyn—the ex-President of the Orange Free State—Smuts, Hertzog, and Dr. Jameson. Not long before Botha had presented the Cullinan diamond, now known as the South African diamond, to the Queen, to be worn by the successive Queens of England as a gift from the South African nation. When I saw the Queen before the luncheon, I ventured to say that it would

be a gracious act if she put on this diamond. She said, "Oh, why did you not remind me before? It is in the Tower, but I will send for it." Within half an hour this great, romantic jewel was handed to her at lunch, she passed it round the table, then put it on. King Edward was extraordinarily kind, especially to ex-President Steyn, who was quite broken up by the manifold hardships he had suffered in the war, and could only walk with difficulty. After lunch the King gave him his arm, supported his slow steps to a sofa, and, for quite half an hour, remained in converse with him. Botha told me that Steyn said afterwards: "Well, now I know there is at least one man in England who understands and sympathises with the Dutch."

Not long after the World War, the day before he left England for South Africa, where, alas, he died within a short time, Botha and his wife lunched with my wife and me in London. He recalled the episode which I have just described, and said: "That was the real turning-point." Such is the influence that can be exerted by a wise sovereign.

The Bill passed through the House of Commons with no serious opposition, except on points of detail. After I had introduced the second reading Alfred Lyttelton rose, and, in a speech of rare eloquence, commended it to the House and to his party. Apart from the great issues involved it was to me like a good dream come true to hear this man, whom I loved so well, but with whom I had been engaged in such bitter controversy, saying generous words of his erstwhile opponent. Mr. Asquith summed up the debate on the third reading in one of those wonderful, very short speeches, of which he alone had the secret, and the Bill passed without a division. Undoubtedly it was a great act of state. Herr Dernburg, the German Colonial Minister, one of the two Germans I knew—Lichnovsky was the other—who was genuinely opposed to a war with England under any circumstances, said to me afterwards, referring to the South African settlement: "You English

are extraordinary people. If you can do this you can do anything."

I was rewarded for my share in this great event by being made a Privy Councillor.

During this period the Imperial Conference of 1909 was held. Lord Crewe presided, and matters of deep importance were discussed concerning the great problem of Imperial Defence. For the first time delegates from the Dominions were made fully aware of the urgency of the problem. The Prime Minister welcomed them, and set forth very frankly the dangers which undoubtedly confronted the Empire. They were much impressed and promised their help, but, of course, with the reservation that they must consult their Ministers and Parliaments, as far as it was possible to do so.

The lighter side of the conference was provided by Mr. Fisher, the Prime Minister of the Orange Free State, a good humoured old gentleman, who seldom spoke, but always to the point. The question of contribution to the Navy, either in money or in ships, had been carefully considered, and, in the end, was fruitful of good results. But for the moment no Prime Minister could commit himself. At the conclusion, in order that a proper record might be kept, Lord Crewe having asked each Prime Minister what he was prepared to do, all were compelled to say, while expressing the cordial will to help, that they could do nothing for the time being. When it came to Mr. Fisher's turn to make a remark, he said: "My country, like Switzerland, cannot have much of a navy. It seems to me, Lord Crewe, that you have passed the hat round, and, having got it back, find nothing in it. Perhaps in this company you are lucky to have got back the hat."

Meantime, my work at the Colonial Office, and afterwards at the War Office, combined with my work on the Committee of Imperial Defence, ever grew in volume. Amongst other things, I was appointed President of the Sub-Committee to form the Royal Flying Corps. Arthur Lee, now Lord Lee

of Fareham, suggested that I should go for a fly, so he drove me down to Hendon to meet Graham White. It happened to be blowing hard, and at first he said it was ridiculous to go up on such a bad day. However, in the end, I induced him to taxi his machine to the far side of the ground and make a short flight against the wind. *The Times* heard of it, and announced that I was the first Minister in any country to fly, which, I suppose, was true, because the art was in its infancy then. I have flown hundreds of thousands of miles since, and have had nearly every accident except the fatal one, but I shall always remember my first flight, and the astonishing skill of that bird-man, Graham White, in keeping his quaint craft the right way up and in the air on that gusty day.

Not long afterwards I had an interview with King Edward. It is of peculiar interest, especially at the present time. I received a message that His Majesty wished to see me, and thought it was on the subject of some appointment, Lord Crewe being temporarily away. After we had talked for a moment on Colonial affairs the King said: "I have sent for you because I take a great interest in you, and there is something I want to say to you. Heaven preserve us from a government of best men." The King knew, as a result of my efforts in passing the South African Bill, that I had come to dislike party politics intensely, and dreamed of the time described by Macaulay when "None were for the party, but all were for the State." I replied: "I see, sir, you wish parties to be divided vertically, with dukes and crossing-sweepers together on either side, and not horizontally, the rich above and the poor below." The King answered: "Jackie Fisher told you that." "No, sir, I told him." He laughed and said: "You must settle that between you, but I am serious when I say that is what I did mean. It is all very simple. Let us consider it. The King appoints a government of best men. If they are fit for their positions they govern; then, of course, they become unpopular and the people want a change, for they know they have got to be

governed, but they don't enjoy the process. So this government of best men is defeated. What is the King to do then?" I waited. He continued: "Don't you see, his only course is to send for a government of worse men. It is all very obvious; you think it over. You are a very young man, almost my youngest Privy Councillor, and I ask you always to remember what I have said to-day."

Shortly afterwards the King became dangerously ill, and contracted the severe illness from which he died. It is impossible to exaggerate the good that he did during his short reign.

Soon after King George's accession, Mr. Asquith reconstructed his government. Lord Crewe became Lord President of the Council, and Harcourt took his place as Secretary of State for the Colonies. Mr. Asquith begged me to remain as Under-Secretary of State, and wrote me the most charming letter. It was, of course, a step down for me, since for more than three years I had been spokesman of one of the greatest offices in the State in the House of Commons. But I was not destined to remain there long, for within a year Haldane asked me to go and help him at the War Office, as Under-Secretary of State. I had no kind of promise, but it seemed possible that I might succeed him, if, and when, he went to the Woolsack.

And so it happened. On June 12th, 1912, I was gazetted Secretary of State, and received the Seals of Office from the King.

CHAPTER X

Interview with von Bieberstein—Committees of Defence—Co-operation of Shipowners—Secretary of State for War—England's Preparedness for the Great War—Official Secrets Act—A Bill Passed in a Day—A Visit to Spain—Foch at the Cambridge Manœuvres—Maurice Hankey: the Man Who Won the War—Letters from French and Botha—Death of Mrs. Seely.

DURING the years before I became Secretary of State for War, my conviction had been growing that war with Germany was inevitable. My view received striking confirmation in an interview which I had with the German Ambassador, Baron Marshall von Bieberstein, a few months before his untimely death. It was arranged that I should meet him informally at a house in Belgrave Square. A small party was going on, and his wife and daughter were there. We strolled away into a quiet corner, and he at once began the conversation. He said: "Why can't our people be at peace together." I replied: "I am quite sure that every Member of the Cabinet, and almost every man in England, would agree with me in replying that we do not want to go to war with Germany. All we want is to let things be as they are." His heavy face lit up as he turned to me and said: "You want to maintain the *status quo*?" I said: "Yes." He replied: "Our people do not like your *status quo*. It means that for all time you will have command of the whole of the sea and all the best places on the land." Still looking at me intently, he added: "Our people cannot accept your *status quo*." I replied: "They had better do so. It is the only way." There was a long pause, then he said: "May I introduce you to my daughter," and the interview ended.

I reported the interview to Asquith, who was much perturbed. He saw the Ambassador frequently thereafter, and, as he records in his *Memoirs*, found that the Ambassador regretted what seemed to him to be the inevitable clash, and

did what he could to avoid it. But the interview is interesting in that it shows that nothing but surrender on our part would have averted the struggle.

So I set to work with redoubled energy and secrecy to prepare. The work for the Committee of Defence was divided up into many sections. As I have said before I was chairman of five of these committees at one time. Every possible form of enemy attack on the Empire was considered. An interesting fact is that no single scheme of attack by us on others was thought out or prepared. This omission may, or may not, have been wise. But so it was. The first sub-committee over which I presided dealt with our food supplies. It was clear that in a war with Germany it might be possible for the enemy to interrupt the supplies of food to our eastern seaboard. It was equally clear that this might happen at the very beginning of the war. The problem, by no means a simple one, was to divert all the supplies to western ports, and thence feed the whole of Britain. All this had to be thought out, and definite, complete plans made, on the assumption that these new bases of supply might have to be called into existence at the same moment that the Expeditionary Force was being despatched overseas. It was an intricate business. But a solution was found. As it turned out, the Navy was so successful in the first days and weeks of the war that the necessity for the complete diversion of food ships to the west did not arise. Nevertheless, much of what we thought, planned and decided, was of great value in other ways.

I have referred to my chairmanship of the committee which had the task of forming the Royal Flying Corps, with its naval and military wings. The building up of an entirely new fighting force both in men and material must be a long business. But we were the first nation seriously to set about preparing an organization to that end. When war broke out the skeleton organization was complete, and it was for that reason that we were able to expand with greater rapidity than others. More-

over, that gallant little band of pilots and observers who, under the command of David Henderson, flew over to join Sir John French's Expeditionary Force in August, 1914, rendered yeomen service, and the glowing tributes of Sir John French and Marshal Joffre in their early despatches to the work done by the British Flying Corps will never be forgotten. Closer co-operation between the Navy and the Army was another essential thing. After much discussion Winston agreed to the formation of a little body, which I called the "High Level Bridge." The only members of this committee were Winston, as First Lord; Prince Louis of Battenburg, the First Sea Lord; French, as Chief of the Imperial General Staff; and myself as Secretary of State for War. The Permanent Secretaries of the Admiralty and the War Office were in attendance, with Maurice Hankey as Secretary of the Committee in order to link it up with the Committee of Imperial Defence.

A vital matter difficult to complete was the transport of the British Expeditionary Force, in order to fulfil our treaty obligations in the event of the invasion of Belgium. It was a baffling problem. If the shipping for the transport of six divisions were to be kept ready it would mean an annual expenditure of many millions of money, and an announcement that we thought war inevitable. If, on the other hand, certain suitable ships were ear-marked for the purpose, gutted of their contents, and fitted as transports on the outbreak of war, it might well be that the war would be over before the troops arrived. In this dilemma, in consultation with the Prime Minister, Winston and Sir John French, I summoned to my room in the House of Commons, Sir Thomas Royden, chairman of the Cunard Company; Sir Owen Philipps—now Lord Kylsant—chairman of the Royal Mail; Sir Lionel Fletcher, manager of the White Star Line; and the largest individual shipowner, Mr. Richard Holt, owner of the Blue Funnel Line. Lord Inchcape, the chairman of the P. & O. was not in England at the moment, but I was sure of his co-operation. These between them owned,

or controlled, half the first-class steam tonnage of the world.

I put the problem to them, impressed upon them the absolute need for secrecy, and asked what they could suggest. After a long discussion they agreed to return in a week's time with their proposals. The following week they assembled again. They said that the problem, though most intricate, was soluble, and that Sir Thomas Royden and Sir Lionel Fletcher had undertaken to give up all other work in order to complete the plans. For many months these two men worked hard. The recording angel will, I am sure, forgive Sir Thomas Royden for the ingenious explanations he made for his presence at unexpected French ports. Acting with them was the Admiralty representative, whose skill in concealing his identity was as remarkable as it was successful. Within six months they produced their plan. It involved immense expenditure on the outbreak of war, but very little before. If Sir Thomas Royden and his colleagues wish for the gratitude of their fellow countrymen they will have it in full measure when I record on the authority of General Lanrezac, that the British Expeditionary Force arrived at the point named in France three days before scheduled time.

The question of England's preparedness for the Great War is one that has been discussed many times, and it is remarkable that so many opinions should still be possible on what is after all a simple matter of fact. Matters of fact, which are capable of proof, ought not to be within the field of discussion; but on this particular point the truth has been obscured, because it seems to be imagined that any admission of "preparation" by England would be tantamount to admitting a share, at least, of "war guilt." This is a complete *non sequitur*. I venture to prophecy that the future historian of the war and its causes will see in the conflagration of 1914 the unavoidable result of a set of circumstances which had been slowly ripening for many years: that he will fasten "war guilt" not on any single person, however highly placed, but on the political aspirations and

policies of the contending nations: and that his definition of these rival policies will be, a desire by Germany to expand, a resolve by England to maintain its *status quo*. This may seem obvious now, but in 1913 many acute minds were quite blind to the unwelcome possibilities of the future. On the other hand there were many who foresaw an inevitable clash, which they hoped against hope might be averted, but for which, in any event, they saw we must provide. Upon those who were blind to the danger no responsibility, save for their blindness, rested: but those who, like myself, were aware of the true position, would have been criminally negligent and failing in their duty if it could truly be said that England went into the combat unprepared. The legend of a country so lost to a realisation of its interests and predicament that it blundered into the greatest war of all time without thought or forethought, and muddled through somehow by good luck, is one so unfair and untrue that it is a duty to destroy it. I may claim, perhaps, to be as well qualified as any man alive to perform that duty, by telling what our position and attitude truly were, because, in the years immediately preceding that outbreak which plunged Europe into mourning and bankruptcy, I occupied the responsible office of Secretary of State for War.

The appointment brought a mass of work, so great that only a really healthy and happy man could have enjoyed it. But I revelled in it all. If it were announced that there would be an all-night sitting in the House of Commons, I would say: "So much the better, I shall get through so much more work." And it was tremendously hard work. My private secretaries used to say that it was necessary for me to work four hours on Saturdays, six hours on Sundays and fourteen hours a day the rest of the week. This may have been an exaggeration on the part of devoted friends, still it was not very far from the truth. But I was amply rewarded; the Prime Minister, Edward Grey, Winston Churchill, Lloyd George, Reginald McKenna, Rufus Isaacs, and, above all, Lord

Haldane, were ever ready with encouragement and help. It was a life of hard work, and real stress, constantly illumined by the increasing devotion of one's friends. Nor was this precious comradeship confined to my own party. I may claim to have taken a leading part in securing the inclusion of Mr. Arthur Balfour, Leader of the Opposition, in the secret committee to inquire into the possibilities of invasion: he gave me constant counsel and help. Then came an episode, which has not yet been disclosed, redounding to the credit of the Opposition of that day. Soon after I was appointed Secretary of State for War St. John Brodrick and George Wyndham came to me with the statement that they had consulted Mr. Balfour and Lord Lansdowne, and had agreed that they would use every endeavour to smooth the passage of the Army Estimates, even though they might think them inadequate and might not approve of all our plans. They said that they were convinced that war was impending, although it might be years before it came: that they knew we were doing our best to prepare, and therefore they would do all in their power to help us. I conveyed this information to Mr. Asquith, and from him and from myself told them of our profound gratitude.

There was a small but powerful group in the House of Commons, so closely allied with the Liberal Party as almost to be one with them, the Labour Members, mostly representing mining constituencies. The Father of the House of Commons, Mr. Thomas Burt, the Member for Morpeth, was one. He had the affection and regard of the House of Commons in a way which I have never seen equalled. He had been a working miner as a little boy, but all the hardships, and, indeed, cruelties which he had endured had left no trace of bitterness in his heart, or in his nature. His quite fearless, upright spirit not only merited, but commanded, the attention and respect of King, Lords and Commons. His colleague in the north was Fenwick; his devoted friend Sir Edward Grey. In addition to these Liberal-Labour Members for mining constituencies there

was J. H. Thomas, the Member for Derby, then, as now, the chosen representative of the railway men of the country. A wonderful platform speaker, an able Parliamentarian, but, above and beyond all, an ardent patriot. Add to these Will Crooks, a man of whimsical speech and really saintly character. All of them were ready with their help in any emergency affecting national defence.

Of course, as in all matters pertaining to a possible war which everyone wishes to avert, secrecy was essential, and was maintained. But members of the House of Commons who remember those days will recall the smooth passage of the successive Army Estimates which I presented to the House.

The comradeship went further still, for the whole House seemed anxious to help, even in that time of bitter political controversy. This was dramatically proved one Friday morning towards the end of a session. Sir John French and Henry Wilson represented to me that it was vital for us not only to increase the secret service fund, but, a much more important matter, pass a more stringent Official Secrets Act. For various reasons the matter was really urgent. Moreover, it was just one of those things in which discussion might do infinite harm. The Bill, giving extremely drastic powers to the executive, was duly prepared and printed. I went to the Speaker on the Friday morning, when the House had assembled, and told him that I proposed to ask permission to pass the Bill through all its stages, there and then, in one sitting. I had, of course, seen Mr. Lowther on the subject beforehand, but had not suggested this most unparliamentary proceeding. The Speaker had always been an extraordinarily kind friend to me, but he could not stand this proposal. He said it was contrary to every parliamentary precedent and to every principle of sound government. He added: "Of course I can't prevent your trying, but I cannot help you, and if I am appealed to shall have to give an adverse decision. Now ask Courtenay Ilbert." So I descended from the Speaker's Chair to where the Clerk of

the House of Commons (as Ilbert then was) sits, just below the chair, and told him what I had said to the Speaker. He was even more horrified; said that the proposal was revolutionary, and that he could not be a party to it. But I had seen some faithful friends in all parts of the House: George Wyndham, F. E. Smith, T. P. O'Connor, John Redmond, as well as the leading critics on our own side of the House, so I thought it was well worth while to have a try. I got up and proposed that the Bill be read a second time, explaining, in two sentences only, that it was considered desirable in the public interest that the measure should be passed. Hardly a word was said and the Bill was read a second time; the Speaker left the Chair. I then moved the Bill in Committee. This was the first critical moment; two men got up to speak, but both were forcibly pulled down by their neighbours after they had uttered a few sentences, and the committee stage was passed. The Speaker walked back to his chair and said: "The question is, that I report this Bill without amendment to the House." Again two or three people stood up; again they were pulled down by their neighbours, and the report stage was through. The Speaker turned to me and said: "The third reading, what day." "Now, sir," I replied. My heart beat fast as the Speaker said: "The question is this Bill be read a third time." It was open to anyone of all the members in the House of Commons to get up and say that no bill had ever yet been passed through all its stages in one day without a word of explanation from the minister in charge. It was open to any of them to say that such a gross interference with the liberty of the subject had never been presented to the House of Commons, even in most troublous and revolutionary times. But to the eternal honour of those members, to whom I now offer, on behalf of that and all succeeding governments, my most grateful thanks, not one man seriously opposed, and in a little more time than it has taken to write these words that formidable piece of legislation was passed. It had already passed the House of Lords without

opposition; within twenty-four hours it received the Royal assent, and was the law of the land. Little did those who were present know how soon this Act of Parliament would be needed, and what far reaching and decisive results flowed from it. It is common ground amongst the students of the late war, that the British Secret Service was the best organised, the most ready for war and the most successful of them all. But the striking success of the Secret Service, acknowledged by friend and foe alike, could never have been achieved unless the Official Secrets Act had been passed almost without comment on that fateful day.

The problem of the defence of the British Empire was more complex at that moment than any that confronted any government in the world. Not only are the lines of communication longer and more vulnerable than in the case of any empire the world has known, but in addition almost every part of it has a defence problem of its own, needing assistance of one kind or another from the mother country. In the case of an alert, rich and vigorous opponent, like Germany, it was certain that every known means would be adopted to foment disturbances in all parts of the world coloured red on the map.

The naval and military problem at the centre was more complicated than that confronting any other nation. Let it be remembered that on the day war was declared over one million two hundred thousand men in the British Empire stood to arms: a great fleet exerted its mysterious power; our tiny, but highly organised, Air Force was ready; and every soldier, sailor, airman, territorial, telegraphist, stationmaster, merchant captain, doctor, nurse, knew his or her place, where to go, what to do. Swiftly sea mastery was obtained, and in the end complete. No hostile foot, except in small numbers, was set on any part of the vast Dominions of the Crown, and a victory more decisive than any ever recorded in history was ours.

A French soldier of distinction said to me, about six months after the war had begun: "Without doubt history will record that of all the nations who went into the war you had thought

it out best beforehand. Perhaps history will add that, nevertheless, you ran it rather fine." I told this to my great friend, General Foch, a few weeks later. He said: "Yes, I agree. History will say that you thought it out the best, and history will be right. History will say that you ran it rather fine, but of the truth of that I am not so sure. As I told you at Cambridge, great numbers are not decisive in war. If you had tried for more you might have achieved less."

I believe Foch was right. At any rate, preparation was thorough within the limits decided on, even meticulous.

Among the results which followed from the inquiries at the Committee of Imperial Defence, over which it fell to my lot to preside, may be mentioned (apart from the Official Secrets Act, already referred to) the scheme by which, at the outbreak of war, the railways were taken over by the State and worked on its behalf as a single concern by the railway managers themselves; the arrangements for adjusting any clash of interests in time of war between naval, military and civil interests as to priority of traffic over the railways; the elaborate means by which, for the first time in our history, secrecy was preserved (including a voluntary arrangement entered into by the proprietors of all our newspapers) in regard to details of the mobilisation of our forces, and more particularly the transport to the Continent of the Expeditionary Force; the creation and organisation of the Royal Flying Corps; and the collection of a vast amount of invaluable information regarding the source, transportation and distribution of our supplies. It would be easy to devote a chapter to each of these subjects if space permitted. It will suffice to quote the late Sir Julian Corbett, who, after a profound examination of all the material, wrote as follows:

Amongst the many false impressions that prevailed when, after the lapse of a century we found ourselves involved in a great war, not the least erroneous is the belief that we were

*not prepared for it. Whether the scale on which we prepared was as large as the signs of the times called for, whether we did right to cling to our long-tried system of a small Army and a large Navy, are questions that will long be debated; but, given the scale which we deliberately chose to adopt, there is no doubt that the machinery for setting our forces in action had reached an ordered completeness in detail that has no parallel in our history.**

As Secretary of State for War I took little interest and very little part in political controversy.

One frequent relaxation during an all-night sitting was a symposium, after work was done, in my room in the House, with George Wyndham and Ramsay MacDonald. The latter gave us his books on Socialism, and we would endeavour to argue him out of it. He was as stubborn as he was good humoured. George Wyndham said one night: "If Ramsay MacDonald had his way everything would be socialised, or municipalised, except the clothes we stand up in." "No," retorted Ramsay, "I know several men of your build; I shall want the clothes, but I will leave you your toothbrush."

One rare holiday was a visit to Spain. A somewhat acute diplomatic difficulty had occurred in connection with Gibraltar, and the Cabinet asked me to go out and find the real cause of the trouble, and do what I could to put it right. The cruiser *Hyacinth* happened to be going to the Cape, so, with the faithful George Nicholson, I took passage in her.

We were treated with great kindness, and, on nearing Gibraltar were entertained by a demonstration of the power of submarines. On a given signal the *Hyacinth* was presumed to have received warning of possible submarine attack; she proceeded to zig-zag, crossed over to the African coast near Ceuta, then turned back on her tracks, and generally, did all

* Official History of the War. Naval operations. Vol. I, Chapter I.

the things with which everyone became familiar three years later, during the war. We often thought we saw a periscope, but the first thing that we really did see was a torpedo approaching us, just under the surface. It hit us amidships, and the impartial umpire recorded that we should have gone to the bottom forthwith.

From Gibraltar I went to Madrid, where I was entertained to a great banquet by the then Prime Minister, Count Romanones. The next day I was received by the King, and all difficulties were smoothed out. He knew that I was interested in flying, and said that he had arranged for a demonstration at their new aerodrome, adding that they had only just started, and there were very few who knew how to fly. We arrived at the aerodrome; a demonstration flight was given by one of their airmen, who was a cousin of the King. He flew very well, but came down with a frightful bump; however, he emerged from his machine unhurt. Another pilot then asked me if I would do him the great honour of going for a fly with him. Of course I could not say "no," so professed the greatest delight in accepting. I did not know much about flying; very few people did in those days, but I had flown enough in our machines to discern that the one in which I was invited to take my place was of a somewhat old fashioned and unstable type. Moreover, it had already had an accident or two, and the repairs with leather straps looked of a rather makeshift character. However, up we went in fine style, and flew over the outskirts of Madrid. We arrived back, about two thousand feet above the aerodrome, and the pilot started to come down. Fortunately, there was a strong, gusty wind blowing. As we descended we began to spin, and I knew enough about the business to realise that we were in what is called "a spinning nose dive." When we were near the ground a sudden puff caught us and tipped up one wing; just at the right moment, the pilot, with great skill, seized the opportunity to effect a landing. We both scrambled out; the pilot stood up, took off

his flying helmet with a sweep, made a low bow, and said: "I have never done her quite that way before." I replied: "Thank you very much. I hope you will never do it again." He was a most charming man, and afterwards, I have been told, distinguished himself greatly in the Moroccan War.

In August, 1912, French came to see me and said: "Would it not be a good plan for us to invite to our manœuvres an eminent French soldier who is likely to take a leading part in the defence of France if the war which you anticipate happens?" As always, the difficulty in preparing without inciting undue suspicion and distrust was sufficiently obvious in this case. But I decided to take the risk, and said: "Yes. Whom shall we invite?" He replied: "I think the most remarkable man in the French Army, although he is far away from being senior, is a man called Foch. He is an artillery officer, who has had much peace experience, but was too young to engage in the actual fighting in 1870, and has taken no part in any of their Colonial wars. I don't think that makes any difference, do you?" I said: "No, what is he doing now?" He answered: "His post corresponds to head of our Staff College at Camberley. But the main point is, he is the kind of man with whom I know I can get on." Accordingly the invitation was sent, with a note from myself. Foch duly came, and I met him at the Cambridge manœuvres in September of that year. I introduced him to the King, and towards the close of the day rode with him for an hour or more. His conversation, which I recorded at the time, is interesting. He said that though our Army was a small one it might well be more formidable than a big one. "The armies have outgrown the brains of the people who direct them. I do not believe that there is any man living big enough to control these millions. They will stumble about, and then sit down helplessly in front of each other, thinking only of their means of communication to supply these vast hordes, who must eat. Your little Army, directed by my friend French, with your sea power enabling you to send them



ARMY MANŒUVRES—Cambridge, 1912
King George V conversing with General Foch
Left—Lord Albermarle and the Author, then Secretary of State for War

where you will, may well prove decisive if ever a conflict comes."

This meeting was the beginning of a friendship, which lasted in uninterrupted amity, except for one brief moment when the French Army evacuated Chanak, until the day of his death. The affection which I bore him was so great that I find it almost difficult to write these lines so soon after his death. When I was taken on the morning after he passed away to see him lying there, with the English decorations of which he was so proud, on his blue tunic, his staff officer told me that shortly before he died he referred to me repeatedly, hoping that he might soon see me.

So my work as Secretary of State, and as an active member of the Committee of Imperial Defence, went on ever increasing in volume and in difficulty. In difficulty, particularly, because of the need of secrecy. Naval defensive preparation was an obvious necessity for an island power. Military preparation, if disclosed, would not only render nugatory the plans made, but might create a parliamentary crisis of the first magnitude, during which all preparation would come to a full stop. However, I had every advantage in those with whom I worked. It is worth while to take them in order. Of my personal private secretary, George Nicholson, I have spoken. Enough to say he had qualities for the position of the highest order. My War Office private secretary was that remarkable man Creedy—now Sir Herbert Creedy, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for War. I have seen, as others have seen, Creedy anxious, but neither I nor anyone else has seen him ruffled. I think the word "urbane" was specially coined for him. Moreover, he had industry and competence in the highest degree. My parliamentary private secretary was Godfrey Collins, who, having served all his early life with credit in the Royal Navy, had become the head of his father's publishing business and the Member for Greenock. The Under-Secretary of State was Jack Tennant; the Financial Secretary, Harold Baker, both

close friends and industrious workers. The Director of Personal Services was Macready—afterwards to become Adjutant-General in France, later Chief Commissioner of Police, and, finally, Commander-in-Chief in Ireland. His assistant was Childs, universally known as "Fido." Whenever there was fear of conflict between the Civil Power and the population as, for instance, in South Wales, these two went to the threatened area. And wonderful work they did in keeping the peace and avoiding a clash between the military and the civil population. The Director of Operations was Henry Wilson.

The military members of the Army Council were von Donop, Master-General of the Ordnance; Jack Cowans, Quartermaster-General; Sir Spencer Ewart, Adjutant-General and General Sir John French. It was a good combination. All through this time, as, indeed, from the moment when I had first become a minister, I constantly saw, and corresponded, with Sir John Fisher. Using the word in its exact and literal sense, he was the most extraordinary man I have ever met. He was always absolutely certain that he was right in his judgment of men and things, and loved to express these judgments in conversation and on paper in vivid language. He was right more often than he was wrong about events, as history can now record, but he was probably never wrong about men. One day he said to me: "There is a man with a bulging forehead crammed full of brains, who has been created by God Almighty for the discomfiture of William II. It is vital that he should be secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence." I agreed; so, fortunately, did the Prime Minister and the others concerned, and Maurice Hankey was duly appointed.

Here is an extract from an interesting letter I received from the late Lord Fisher:

Excelsior Hotel, Naples.

February 27th, 1912.

. . . the reason I am writing to you is that I hear Ottley has gone to Elswick from the C.I.D., and I beseech you to use all

your influence to get Captain Hankey put in his place. *He is Napoleonic in his ideas and Cromwellian in his thoroughness! Won't you take my word for it? He has been years and years with me. Have I ever failed to substantiate my statements? Am I a d—d fool?*

One might write a volume on the interesting speculation as to who won the war. If I had to name one man, and one man only, I should name Maurice Hankey.

I print this letter, intimate though it may be, from Sir John French to my wife, written on the occasion of his promotion to Field Marshal, on my recommendation, just to show how close co-operation and friendship can be between the civilian and the soldier.

War Office.

June 4, 1912.

Dear Mrs. Seely,

I can't express to you how I appreciate your great kindness in writing to me as you have.

The great honour which has come to me has come I know entirely on your husband's initiation. He had to go out of his way to recommend it to the King, for Lord Wolseley's death caused no vacancy.

I have been deeply touched by this evidence of friendship and trust. Thank God our relations have been ever most cordial, and I shall never cease to be grateful to him, not only for this act of friendship, but for the pleasure he has caused me to feel in the work I have to do under him.

With very many thanks.

As a consequence of this comradeship my life, though strenuous, was indescribably happy.

I was principally concerned in getting some good things done. The appointment by the King of Sir John French as Field-

Marshal, and his designation as Commander in the Field, in the event of war is one of them. Another was the appointment of Botha as a General in the British Army, to which reference has already been made. The letter he wrote to me after his appointment is well worth recording.

*Prime Minister's Office,
Pretoria.*

6th Sept., 1912.

My dear Colonel Seely,

I was indeed glad to receive your letter and thank you most cordially for your kind congratulations. I know, of course, that it is principally due to you and Mr. Harcourt that His Majesty's consent to this high and unique distinction was obtained, and I shall never forget it. Africa is still a land of surprises! I wonder what I would have said if anyone twelve years ago had predicted to me that I would, in a few years' time, be a British General!

I am glad to say that all sections of the people here have heartily joined in congratulating me. I have just returned from a tour through my own constituency, and at every meeting my constituents, most of them old burghers, complimented me very sincerely. It is quite evident that they look upon my appointment as a distinction, not so much personally, but rather as their representative. The English-speaking section of our population has also received my appointment with enthusiasm, but as I have already stated, the Dutch-speaking section, and especially my old burghers, seem to take it more as having been accorded to their representative, and I am sure that His Majesty would be pleased to know this.

One thing I am particularly thankful for, and that is that men like Churchill and yourself, as well as myself and others who were actively engaged in the war, have been given an opportunity of healing the wounds then inflicted and of preparing the

way for a cordial understanding between the races on a basis of mutual respect and confidence.

You would be surprised to see the effects of my conciliation policy and to witness the cordial co-operation between Briton and Boer to-day, and this is why I shall always remain grateful to you and to the Liberal party for the assistance that has been rendered and for the opportunity which has been given us to achieve, what I can confidently say, has been achieved to-day, viz., peace between the two white races in South Africa.

There is one thing which I am very anxious to see, and that is, that His Majesty should visit South Africa. If you could assist to bring this about, I assure you, you would be rendering a great service to this country. I feel convinced that, as the result of such a visit, the last trace of racialism would disappear.

I was particularly pleased to hear that men like General Sir John French and others were so keen on my appointment. This is, indeed, a great satisfaction to me.

Immediately after the receipt of the cable I wrote to Mr. Harcourt, asking him to assure His Majesty of my respectful gratitude.

We are highly pleased with the manner in which the negotiations in connection with the mail and freight contract have been concluded. Sir David Graaf has rendered great services indeed, and I must add, Sir Owen Philipps has been most broad-minded and fair.

On all sides there are signs that the Union is going ahead, and when the new freight contract comes into force, I think we may confidently look forward to a period of great progress.

Mrs. Botha joins me in kindest regards to you and Mrs. Seely.

I did not know that happiness was so soon to be taken from me. This story of my life cannot be fully understood unless I describe how it came about. One evening in July, 1913, I walked home from the House of Commons with my old friend,

T. P. O'Connor. He said: "My dear Jack, you appear to me to be the happiest man alive. How do you manage it?" The recollections of this moment are among the most vivid of my life. I replied: "I think because from my earliest years I have made a conscious effort to face everything, or anything, without fear or anxiety. For instance, if you came to me and said, 'I am sorry to tell you that your fortune is dissipated, your career ruined and that to-morrow morning you will go to prison.' I have tried to steel myself to reply, 'Is there anything I can do about it in the next two hours?' and if you replied, 'No, nothing whatever, the thing is done,' then I hope I should reply, 'Very well let's forget about it and go to dinner.'"

He knew me very well and I remember him saying: "Do you make no reservation of any sort or kind about anything?" I said: "Yes, to tell you the truth, I do not know what I should do if anything happened to my wife. I have not found a way to face that out." A month later my wife died quite suddenly and unexpectedly when my youngest daughter was born. Black darkness fell upon me. My seven children comforted me. My friends showed me kindness and consideration, which I can never repay; Mr. Asquith and his wife, McKenna and his wife, Winston, F. E. Smith, Jack Pease, French, Ian Hamilton, Ramsay MacDonald (who had suffered a similar fate). But for them I know I should have gone mad. As it was, in the shadows I resumed my work.

CHAPTER XI

Bonar Law and Army Rifles—Statement to the Army—Crisis in Ulster—General Gough—A Train that Went Too Late—Resignation.

ALTHOUGH, as I have explained in previous chapters, there was a measure of co-operation in matters of Imperial Defence in both Houses of Parliament and throughout the country without parallel in our history, there were some criticisms, and one great danger.

Of the criticisms, the first arose from the passionate desire of Lord Roberts to secure the passing of a law to raise a conscript army for home defence. I lunched with him one day, and pointed out the impossibility of meeting his wishes. The first reason was that the thing could not be done in time to be of the least use. It would involve the splitting up of all political parties, a prolonged campaign and a General Election. It was extremely doubtful that the country would agree. The inherent hatred of the people of this country to compulsion in time of peace might well be a decisive factor. Moreover, expert opinion was acutely divided. A great army for home defence was the very thing we did not require. Our inquiry had shown conclusively that the invasion of England on a serious scale, so long as our Navy was in being, was an operation which no power could, or would, attempt. Of course, if the Navy were destroyed invasion would become possible. But in that event this country would be helpless from quite other causes, namely, the complete stoppage of her food supplies, and all raw materials. The decisive answer was to be found in the time factor. The Kiel Canal was to be opened in the middle of the

summer of 1914. My own view, which was shared by many, was, that if a war were to come at all, it would come very soon after that event. Under no circumstances would it be possible to pass the necessary legislation and produce a conscript army ready to fight within that time. These arguments did not convince Lord Roberts, though they did the Army Council, and Mr. Balfour. Looking back on it all, I am quite sure we were right.

A more extraordinary controversy arose with regard to the rifle. Our troops were in possession of an exceptionally good rifle, which stood the test of heavy usage in all parts of the world—the first requisite in a rifle. It was a wonderful shooting weapon. On the other hand, it had a lower muzzle velocity than the rifles possessed by most European powers, and, therefore, a slightly higher trajectory. Lord Roberts argued that at a particular range, beginning at about five hundred yards, our bullets would fly just over the heads of an enemy walking towards them, while, at the same range, the enemy's bullets, flying lower, would just shoot our men through the head. Of course the answer was conclusive, that there were a great many elements in a rifle of which extreme flatness of trajectory was the least important. To re-arm the whole army with a new rifle would take a very long time, and, although it was of little moment in those days, would cost a great sum of money; moreover it might well be that when we had got this flatter trajectory rifle we should be sacrificing the wonderful qualities of the rifle which we already possessed.

Then came a strange episode, which I mention in order to warn future statesmen of the danger of jumping into a controversy without adequate thought. Mr. Bonar Law took up this question, and at a great public meeting denounced all concerned, and especially myself, in unmeasured terms for leaving our troops armed with a weapon inferior to that possessed by their possible enemies. A moment's inquiry from any of our experts would have shown him the extreme danger of attempt-

ing to re-arm at so critical a time. Moreover, he would have realised, had he thought it over, that to announce to every soldier in the Empire that he was in possession of a bad weapon might well spread alarm and despondency throughout the ranks. Fortunately, the soldiers paid no attention and no serious harm followed. When the war came it was found that our rifle was so much the best of all the rifles of the combatants that one of our minor difficulties was to prevent our French friends, lying alongside of us, from swapping their rifles for ours. A most curious coincidence was that I, who had been denounced as, in effect, a murderer for leaving the troops with this rifle, had to employ a thousand of my men in carrying up this despised weapon to the front line troops in the battle of Festubert, in order to replace the Ross rifle which had developed certain defects.

These two difficulties were surmounted with pretty general agreement. But with increasing menace one great danger loomed ahead.

It came, as so many dangers have come to the Empire, from Irish aspirations for self government. In December, 1913, it was plain that the Home Rule Bill was likely soon to become law. The Ulster men vowed they would not accept it, and would resist by force of arms any government set up in Dublin which attempted to control them. The organisation of an Ulster Defence Force was begun, and open drilling of large parties of men took place. There was a movement to set up a corresponding force in the south of Ireland. Both of them were determined to get arms.*

Our Army began to be in a ferment. All except the negligible hot heads were, of course, quite prepared to assist the civil power in Ireland as elsewhere, in maintaining law and order, in the normal fashion. They were not prepared to march into Ulster, overwhelm the hastily raised levies by surprise attack, and shoot them down with machine guns in sufficient numbers to quell all opposition.

Though the Army did not know it, the Cabinet were of precisely the same opinion. Every effort was made to get Ulster to agree to some form of contracting out of the Act. Definite proposals to that end had been submitted to John Redmond and Edward Carson. Looking back at it all, one can see that although the British Cabinet, Carson and Redmond, wanted to do the right thing, an irresistible fate was too strong for them.

Meantime the ferment in the Army continued. On the 16th December, 1913, I summoned all the General Officers Commanding-in-Chief in England, Scotland and Ireland, to meet me at the War Office. Sir John French and the Adjutant-General were, of course, with me. I told them that we had received news that certain officers proposed to resign their commissions in the event of their being ordered to attack Ulster, and then made them the following statement:—

I first deal with the legal question. The law clearly lays down that a soldier is entitled to obey an order to shoot only if that order is reasonable under the circumstances. No one, from general officer to private is entitled to use more force than is required to maintain order and the safety of life and property. No soldier can shelter himself from the civil law behind an order given by a superior if that order is, in fact unreasonable and outrageous.

If therefore, officers and men in the Army are led to believe that there was a possibility that they might be called upon to take some outrageous action, for instance, to massacre a demonstration of Orangemen who were causing no danger to the lives of their neighbours, bad as might be the effects on discipline in the Army, nevertheless, it is true that they are, in fact and in law, justified in contemplating refusal to obey.

But there never has been, and is not now, any intention of giving outrageous and illegal orders to the troops. The law

will be respected and must be obeyed. What has now to be faced is the possibility of action being required by His Majesty's troops in supporting the civil power, in protecting life and property if the police are unable to hold their own.

Attempts have been made to dissuade troops from obeying lawful orders given to them when acting in support of the Civil Power. This amounts to a claim that officers and men can pick and choose between lawful and reasonable orders, saying that they will obey in one case and not in another.

The Army has been quite steady. During the past year there has not been brought to the notice of the authorities one single case of lack of discipline in this respect. At the same time, in view of the statements in the Press and elsewhere, it is well to make the position clear.

I directed them to make the position thus outlined perfectly clear to all concerned, and informed them that I should hold each of them individually responsible to see that there was no conduct in their commands subversive to discipline.

They could let it be clearly understood that any such conduct would be dealt with forthwith, under the King's Regulations. If any officer should tender his resignation they would ask for his reasons, and if he indicated in his reply that he contemplated refusing to obey a lawful order, I would at once submit to the King that the officer should be removed.

The General Officers' Commanding-in-Chief promised to carry out my instructions, and for some months all went smoothly, so far as the Army was concerned, in Ireland; but plans to import arms and capture those in possession of outlying stations belonging to our troops continued to be secretly pressed forward.

In a preceding chapter I have said that wherever there was a danger of conflict between the civil power and the population,

where the Army might be required to go to the assistance of the police, we sent General Macready to cope with the situation. Largely due to his skill and foresight collisions in South Wales and elsewhere had been avoided, even at times of great excitement, when bloodshed seemed inevitable. Accordingly I sent him to Ireland with the same staff.

Early in March I received intimation that a concerted effort was to be made to capture the arms in possession of our soldiers at Armagh, Omagh, Carrickfergus, and Enniskillen. I have no doubt that this information was accurate, also that the whole plan was made without the knowledge, and certainly against the wishes, of Sir Edward Carson and any responsible Ulster leader; the last thing they wanted to do at such a critical time was to put themselves in the wrong.

A day or two later we got authentic information from the same source that similar attempt to rush small posts were being contemplated by the wilder spirits in Southern Ireland. Accordingly, on the 14th March, the following letter was sent to Sir Arthur Paget, Commander-in-Chief in Ireland:—

Sir,

I am commanded by the Army Council to inform you, that, in consequence of reports which have been received by His Majesty's Government, attempts may be made in various parts of Ireland by evil-disposed persons to obtain possession of arms, ammunition, and other government stores, it is considered advisable that you should at once take special precautions for safeguarding depôts and other places where arms or stores are kept, as you may think advisable.

It appears from the information received that Armagh, Omagh, Carrickfergus and Enniskillen are insufficiently guarded, being specially liable to attack. You will, therefore, please take the necessary steps and report to this office.

Officers in command of all barracks where guns, small arms, ammunition, and other government stores are located should

be warned that they will be held responsible that all measures to ensure the safety of the stores, etc., under their custody are taken, and that at no time should barracks or buildings be left without adequate armed guards.

I am to add that although certain places have been specially referred to above, the intention is that no steps should be omitted to ensure the safety of government arms and stores in the south as well as in the north of Ireland.

Two days later, on the 16th, I telegraphed to Sir Arthur Paget, asking him to telegraph me what steps he had taken to safeguard our barracks, arms and ammunition in northern and southern Ireland. I also requested him to meet me at the War Office on Wednesday, the 18th. On the 17th Sir Arthur Paget wrote to the War Office giving details of the precautions taken, but adding that certain movements of troops, for the protection of Omagh and Armagh which would be desirable in the interest of safety, would create such intense excitement in Ulster as would possibly precipitate a crisis.

On the morning of the 18th March Sir Arthur Paget met Sir John French, the Adjutant-General and myself in my room at the War Office. We discussed fully the extreme difficulty of safeguarding our stores without precipitating a crisis, which we all wanted to avoid. In the end it was agreed that most of the movements originally planned by Sir Arthur Paget for safeguarding the rifles and ammunition should be carried out. We then and there dispatched the following telegram to Major-General Friend:—

18th March, 1914.

Bedfords to move to places which have been decided. Battalion of 14th Brigade to go to Newry and Dundalk. Battalion, Victoria Barracks, Belfast, to go to Holywood with all ammunition and bolts of rifles if unable to move rifles themselves. These movements to be simultaneous if possible,

and to be complete by dawn, Saturday, 21st, with all secrecy.

Major-General Friend, who was acting in Sir Arthur Paget's absence, replied the following day that the message had been received and that the instructions would be carried out. He added that it was rather doubtful whether the Northern Railway would let the troop trains travel northwards. Sir Arthur Paget replied that if there was any trouble about sending the troops to Dundalk by train, they would have to proceed by sea, and must arrive at Kingstown by 4 p.m.

Sir Arthur then returned to Ireland. The next day I sent him the following telegram:—

Sir N. Macready is better, but cannot cross before Sunday.

It will be essential for you to arrange that some officer represents him for the moment, as Birrell has issued instructions to Commissioner of Police, Belfast, to take instructions from officer appointed general officer commanding there. Wire name of officer appointed temporarily as soon as possible. You should apply to Gt. Northern Railway for facilities for transport of troops and let me know their reply to-day. This may give rise to important legal questions.

The commanding officers of two cruisers now at Kingstown will report to you.

Inform Admiralty as soon as possible whether Battalion intended for Dundalk goes by rail or by sea.

Destroyer "Firedrake" last night left Portland for Kingstown to be at your disposal.

You might think it right to take special measures for the comfort of your troops owing to rough weather.

Any necessary additional expenditure is authorised by this telegram.

Report generally on the situation by wire this afternoon.

All these documents have already been published. But I

reproduce them here so that it may be realised how essential it was found to be by all military authorities concerned to guard the threatened points.

Every soldier with whom I came in contact knew perfectly well that there was no question of enforcing the Home Rule Act on Ulster by force of arms for months, or years, to come; indeed, that such an event would probably never happen. But it was otherwise with officers and men who had no conversations with persons in authority, and who were misled by the wildest statements which were published in some of the newspapers.

The curious thing is that the very training of the soldier made him the more likely to be deceived by these wild tales that the whole armed forces of the Crown, Naval and Military, were to be used to crush Ulster. He had always been taught that if you have to fight somebody, the great thing is to attack him before he is ready, so that a wicked Government, determined to crush Ulster, would be wise in their own interest in attacking forthwith. As a consequence of these wild statements, in many parts of England and Ireland, officers wondered what it was really their duty to do when a terrible dilemma confronted them of obedience to military orders, or obedience to the dictates of their conscience.

On the 20th Sir Arthur Paget addressed his senior officers. It is quite clear that in his desire to be loyal to the Army Council he gave a completely wrong impression to the officers who heard him. I had told him to tell them what was contained in my statement to the General Officers Commanding-in-Chief, on December 16th, and to emphasise that the cruel dilemma which they feared was not impending. But that it was essential to protect all depôts of arms and other government property. I do not know exactly what he did say, but I have gathered that he made an impassioned appeal to them to obey any order, whatever the intention and whatever the cost.

When the orders for the movement of troops, both in northern and southern Ireland, as right and as innocent in their

intention as any orders ever issued, reached the Curragh—our principal military depôt in Ireland—there was the greatest commotion. As I heard from General Gough himself, they believed to a man that this was the great attack of which they had heard rumours.

On the 20th March, the Adjutant-General received a telegram from Sir Arthur Paget, which read:

Regret to report Brigadier and 57 officers, 3rd Cavalry Brigade, prefer to accept dismissal if ordered north.

The proof of the complete misapprehension in the minds of these officers was found in the fact that the secret orders involved the dispatch of this brigade not north but south, the reason for this being that there were greater distances to be covered in the south and a greater number of small outlying posts. Incidentally, had these officers known that for purely military reasons the cavalry were to be ordered south at the first sign of trouble, they would have known that all idea of surprise attack on Ulster was a complete delusion. No commander in his senses would ever order an advance without his cavalry being pushed out well ahead of his forces.

A telegram was sent relieving Brigadier-General Gough of his command, and ordering him to report at the War Office forthwith.

I have said that it is quite clear that Sir Arthur Paget did not give the officers the impression which the Army Council intended, and the proof is found in the Minutes from General Gough to the Headquarters of the Irish Command:

With reference to the communication from the War Office conveyed to me verbally by the Commander-in-Chief this morning, I have the honour to report the result of my interviews with the officers of my brigade.

The officers are of unanimous opinion that further

information is essential before they are called upon at such short notice to take decisions so vitally affecting their whole future, and especially that a clear definition should be given of the terms "Duty as ordered" and "Active operations" in Ulster.

If such duties consist in the maintenance of order and the preservation of property, all the officers of this brigade, including myself, would be prepared to carry out that duty.

But if the duty involves the initiation of active military operations against Ulster, the following numbers of officers by regiments would respectfully, and under protest, prefer to be dismissed:

Brigade staff, 2 officers.

4th Hussars, 17 out of 19 doing duty.

5th Lancers, 17 out of 20 doing duty.

16th Lancers, 16 out of 16 doing duty.

3rd Brigade, Royal Horse Artillery, 6 out of 13 doing duty, "including R.M."

4th Field Troop, Royal Engineers, 1 out of 1 doing duty.

3rd Signal Troop, Royal Engineers, 1 out of 1 doing duty.

In addition, the following are domiciled in Ulster and claim protection as such:

4th Hussars, 2 officers.

5th Lancers, 1 officer.

3rd Brigade, Royal Horse Artillery, 2 officers.

I saw General Gough at the War Office on the morning of March 24th. Before seeing me he had seen Sir John French, who introduced him to me, and said that they had had a satisfactory conversation. General Gough fully understood the necessity for the movement order in the interests of public safety. He equally understood that there was no

intention whatever to march in and crush Ulster by surprise attack. But while he felt bound in honour to say that in the event of such orders being given, he would feel it his bounden duty, at whatever cost, to refuse to obey, now that he knew there was no such intention, he deeply regretted the action he and his officers had taken in complete misapprehension. Sir John French said that he hoped I would restore General Gough to his command, as he was sure that I could count upon the loyal support of every officer in Ireland, now that the misapprehension was removed. General Gough confirmed all that Sir John French had said.

I was greatly relieved and pleased, and told General Gough that he was restored to his command. I handed to him a memorandum, which I had had prepared, setting forth clearly the true facts of the case. I reproduce it here:

You are authorised by the Army Council to inform the officers of the 3rd Cavalry Brigade that the Army Council are satisfied that the incident which has arisen in regard to their resignations has been due to a misunderstanding.

It is the duty of all soldiers to obey lawful commands given to them through the proper channel by the Army Council, either for the protection of public property and the support of the civil power in the event of disturbances, or for the protection of the lives and property of the inhabitants.

This is the only point it was intended to be put to the officers in the questions of the General Officer commanding, and the Army Council have been glad to learn from you that there never has been and never will be in the Brigade any question of disobeying such lawful orders.

His Majesty's Government must retain their right to use all the forces of the Crown in Ireland, or elsewhere, to maintain law and order and to support the civil power in the ordinary execution of its duty.

But they have no intention whatever of taking advantage

of this right to crush political opposition to the policy or principles of the Home Rule Bill.

J.S.

J.F.

J.S.E.

23rd March, 1914.

It will be seen that it was initialled by myself, Sir John French and Sir Spencer Ewart.

After I had said good-bye to General Gough and shaken him warmly by the hand, I went straight across to the Cabinet and informed them of what had happened.

Had the mail train to Ireland been timed to leave at midday instead of in the evening, the story of what actually happened might have been very different. General Gough, as he has since told me, was still afraid of the difficulty of convincing his officers that the great surprise attack was not intended. He remembered that Sir John French had said that in any event the Cavalry Brigade were to go south instead of north. He went to Sir John French and said: "If I could show to my officers a proof that these secret orders will send us south instead of north, they will have no further doubt." He then wrote on the document: "Does this mean that my men will not be ordered to Ulster?" Sir John French wrote underneath: "I so read it."

How it happened I do not know, but this document, thus amended, got into the possession of the Press. It had been arranged that the next 'day I was to make a statement in the House of Commons, identical with the memorandum given to General Gough. Lord Morley was to make a similar statement in the House of Lords. Thus it will be seen I had given a State document to General Gough twenty-four hours in advance of its publication. The premature publication would not have mattered in the least had the document remained unamended. The emendation converted a public statement of Government

policy affecting the whole Army into a thing which looked like a private bargain with a few rebellious officers.

I know that Gough was concerned beyond measure when he realised the effect of his action. But the storm following on the publication can well be imagined. Demands were made in Parliament, and in the Press, for the withdrawal of the document as amended, for, of course, no one could quarrel with the original. Sir John French said "No." I discussed the matter with him, and he said that although he regretted the inference that had been drawn from his additions, he had acted for the best, and that the Army would never stand the withdrawal of an appeasing document on any technical grounds. I thought he was wrong then. But, on looking back, I am not so sure that he was not right. I made up my mind at once that if he insisted on resigning, I would resign, too. Not because I had had anything to do with the supposed bargaining with individual officers, but because I thought that if through this misunderstanding a great soldier were to resign the Secretary of State had best resign also.

One thing I can say with absolute certainty. In those curious days, the point that weighed with French and myself to the exclusion of all others was a desire to avoid any form of mutiny in the Army, in view of what we were certain was an imminent war with Germany. In that we succeeded. No single officer or man in Ireland, or elsewhere, disobeyed a single order. All the orders we had given for movements of troops in Ireland were carried out punctually and without demur. Harm had been done. But disaster had been averted.

Mr. Asquith shouldered the burden of the Secretaryship of State, in addition to his duties as Prime Minister, when I insisted upon resigning. He implored me not to resign, again and again, and so stated in the House of Commons. But something told me that if French went I ought to go too, and no argument would shake my determination.

Finally, Mr. Asquith begged me to retain my work on the



Cartoon from the *Pall Mall Gazette*, November 20th, 1912.

Sergeant Seely: "As you were—"

(Lloyd George, Herbert Samuel, John Redmond, the Prime Minister, A. Birrell, Winston Churchill.)

Committee of Imperial Defence, to which I agreed, and my resignation was duly announced by him in the House.

Without doubt the Ulster crisis was not only a drama of great interest in itself, but had repercussions throughout the world. Foreign countries did not realise that however bitterly the people of these islands may be fighting amongst themselves, at the least sign of foreign menace they come together. Some think that had there been no Irish crisis the Great War would have been averted. There is evidence on the German side in support of that view. Were that true, it would indeed be tragic, but I am sure it is not, and for this reason. The clash of international rivalry was so deep; the material so inflammable that any spark would light it. There were so many reasons making for war, and so few against...I have mentioned several. But there is one more, perhaps the most important of them all. A wise man once said that great wars only begin when the opposing sides are secretly certain of victory. This did not apply to us, since, for obvious reasons, we were the one country that could not conceivably wish to go to war, for the simple reason that we had already got everything that a country could want. We knew that we could gain nothing by war, and that we were certain to lose heavily in men and money, even if we won. But in the other great countries involved it was otherwise. France longed for the recovery of her lost provinces, and both she and her ally, Russia, had an equal longing for security from the ever-increasing menace of the German-Austrian combination. Their General Staff had told them that they had a very good chance of victory—certainly a better chance than they would have in a few years time, when Germany's increasing population and wealth would render her still more formidable. On the other hand, the Germans were trained to the "Hour." Their Army and their Navy were at concert pitch. By June, 1914, the Kiel Canal would be open, thus giving immense strategical advantage to their fleet. Their General Staff informed them that victory was likely, indeed,

almost certain, and that delay was dangerous. But, what was the spark that fired that magazine? Not the Irish crisis, or anything remotely flowing therefrom. If Ireland had been peaceful, or had she never existed, the Archduke Ferdinand would have been murdered at Sarajevo just the same. From that moment, and as a tragic consequence, war was bound to come at once.

Nevertheless, although the Irish crisis did not cause the war, it contains lessons so plain, and warnings so terrible, that they should never be forgotten. England is the heart of the Empire. Party passion is a luxury in which she dare not, and must not, indulge. Politics, yes. Passion, never. Suppose that the officers and men of the Army, by some miracle, had been able to attend the Cabinet meetings of February and March, 1914. No crisis could possibly have arisen, then. They would have heard a group of intelligent men discussing with honesty, and not without competence, the best way to apply the solvent which had brought peace to South Africa to the case of Ireland. They would have heard each one of them say that under no circumstances ought we to attack and overwhelm Protestant Ulster however misguided her views might be. They would have observed that all these men obviously cared much more for England and the Empire than they did for anything else, and, incidentally, that they were all Protestants. But since that could not happen—and never will—the Army was left to read passionate speeches and wild newspaper articles.

“*Hinc illæ lacrymæ.*” For my part, strongly as I believe in the power for good of the League of Nations, I doubt if it can ever avert war between nations until the peace spirit animates those nations within their own borders. In other words, condition precedent to peace abroad is peace at home. The proverb “Example is better than precept” is more true in this case than in any other.

CHAPTER XII

August 1914—Special Service Officer—Le Château—Value of Cavalry in Early Stages—Battle of Guise—Two Narrow Escapes—Paris and General Gallieni.

THE long anticipated declaration of war was made on August 3, 1914. It found me in a very different position from that which I had anticipated two years before. True, I was still in constant attendance at the Committee of Imperial Defence, but I was not, as I might well have expected, the head of the great organisation controlling the military movements of the Empire. On the other hand, this comparative freedom enabled me to accept the appointment which was pressed upon me by Sir John French, that of Special Service Officer to the Expeditionary Force. My close friendship with General Foch, whom I had invited to our Army manœuvres in 1912, together with my knowledge of the plans and arrangements made for the transport and movement of the Expeditionary Force, were the cause of this appointment.

My duties were to proceed to the front line of both the British and French Armies each day, and report personally to Sir John French. These duties I carried out to the best of my ability, and Sir John French was good enough to say publicly at the close of the war that my reports had been of value. As a consequence of this position, I had a time of quite exceptional interest during the retreat from Mons, at the Battle of the Marne, and during the brief siege of Antwerp.

The Expeditionary Force began to cross within a few days of the declaration of war. I left London for Southampton on Tuesday, August 11th. The night before leaving London

Lord Riddell dined with me at the Reform Club. He kindly sent me an extract from his diary, which he wrote on the same evening:

Monday, August 10th, 1914. In the evening I dined with Jack Seely and his son at the Reform Club—a farewell dinner. He thinks we have a hard job before us, and that the mortality will be terrible. As we walked back to Queen Anne's Gate through the park, we sat on the bridge which crosses the ornamental waters. In the distance we could see the Foreign Office with the aerial gun on the roof. Seely said: "I shall often think of this moment as I lie out in the field looking at the moon and stars as one does when one is campaigning." Turning to his son, he said: "You will have to be a father to the family while I am away. If I don't come back you will have to look after them. I shall rely on you." The boy said: "I shall do my best."

I went back to his home to shake hands with his valet—a very nice man who is accompanying him. They went through the South African War together.

It was a tremendous moment to me when I left London on my way to join the Army. The long anticipated moment had arrived; after ten years of thought and four years of intensive preparation, the whole thing was to be put to the test. My belief, as I had told Lord Riddell, was that the losses on both sides would be frightful. It seemed to me that the forces were so evenly matched that a decision was impossible for several years. I remembered what Foch had told me about the difficulty of controlling these vast numbers. It took no wizard to foresee that they would blunder up against each other, and sooner or later the defensive power of wire and smokeless powder would bring temporary stale mate. As far as I personally was concerned, I never expected to see England again. I had told the King when I saw him, before I left, that

I would not take any leave until the war was won.

I arrived with the Headquarters Staff at Le Câteau, the first headquarters of the British Army in France, early in August, 1914. With me were my servant Smith, my chauffeur Anthony, who had been chauffeur to Sir John French, and returned to him later when he went to Ireland as Viceroy; and my young thoroughbred "Warrior," destined to survive the whole war and win the Isle of Wight Point-to-Point on the anniversary of the Battle of Moreuil in 1922. The first man to bring news of the Belgian Army was the Belgian Chief-of-Staff, who had come through to Sir John French to apprise him of the situation. He gave me a vivid account of the capture of Liège, of the great losses which both sides had sustained, and of the irresistible drive of the German Army. He had no doubt that their wide encircling movement would compel retirement almost to the gates of Paris; in fact, his prophecies, though gloomy, turned out to be surprisingly near the truth. Our outposts had so far seen only small bodies of German cavalry, but it was known that a portion of Von Kluck's army was moving across our front. The actual movements of troops during the retreat which followed is a matter of history, but some of the things I saw, and the impressions I formed, may be worth recording.

One outstanding fact, which seems to have been forgotten, is that without our cavalry the whole force must have been completely overwhelmed. It is sometimes said that the main purpose of cavalry is to reconnoitre and then to exploit a victory; but the greatest service which cavalry can render, as it did on this occasion in full measure, is to prevent a repulse and retreat from becoming a rout. This for the obvious reason that, as cavalry can move at least three times faster than infantry, they can hold up an advance and inflict losses on the enemy, then retire unmolested, and have plenty of time to establish themselves in another position and repeat the operation. Thus, by continually delaying the enemy, they give time

for their own slower-moving infantry to extricate themselves, and to retire in some sort of order until the favourable moment comes for renewing the battle. In all this desperate business cyclists would have been of incalculable help to the cavalry. And yet we had 14 Territorial Cyclists Battalions, all of which were kept at home. All part of the fatal delusion that Auxiliary Forces are of no value in war until after a prolonged period of further training. Again and again during these fateful days of August our cavalry, supported by the horse artillery and often by the field artillery too, performed this service. General Sordet, with the French cavalry, first on our right and later on our left, fulfilled the same rôle. Taking the long view, it was the exhaustion of our cavalry which compelled Smith-Dorrien to turn and fight at Le Câteau. I took many messages to General Smith-Dorrien during this period, and I am sure, in my own mind, that Smith-Dorrien had no option but to stand and fight as he did. My duties took me daily to the ultimate rearguard, so I saw much of the fighting. The retreat was a nightmare, illuminated by acts of splendid courage. It is a sad thing in warfare that, from the nature of the case, many of the most heroic acts go unrecorded and unrewarded. It is in the days of disaster that the higher courage is needed by those who hold on to the last, to stay the advance of a victorious host. If they stay to the very last, as our infantry, cavalry, and especially our gunners constantly did, they are killed, or wounded and captured and there are none left to tell the story.

Our losses in the retreat were very heavy, but there was no waste of life on our side. The thing was so near that one can say with certainty that, but for the stubborn determination of these brave men, Von Kluck must have entered Paris to the ruin of the Allied cause.

On one occasion I was asked by Sir John French to remain at Ham until our troops had passed and the bridge over the canal had been blown up, which I accordingly did. Having seen the

Engineer officer in charge of the demolition, I went forward some way and picked up as many slightly wounded men, struggling along with the retreating column, as I could and got them across the bridge. I then went to a spot whence I had a good view of the advancing Germans. First came a group of cyclists on the main road, on each flank a troop of cavalry, behind the cyclists a Jaeger battalion, and behind the Jaeger four lorries. I assumed these to be supplies, but not so. When they came within about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles of Ham the lorries turned about and brought two small howitzers into action, which proceeded to drop shells into the road beyond the bridge. Our men were still streaming across the bridge, and the Engineer Officer waited until the very last possible minute before blowing it up, indeed, he effected the demolition most successfully in a hail of bullets and got safely away.

On my return from Maubeuge, whither I had been sent to warn the Commander of the Fortress that our troops must retire on each side of him the following morning, I passed through St. Quentin, and was exceedingly fortunate to escape capture. The town was temporarily occupied by a body of German cavalry; they retired after a few hours, and a portion of our rearguard re-entered the town. The Germans then occupied it again, and remained in possession of the town until nearly the end of the war. I happened to go through St. Quentin during the first brief occupation. It was raining in torrents, and the town was in complete darkness as I drove up to Sir John French's headquarters in one of the streets leading off the Grande Place. After much ringing of bells and banging at the door, the frightened face of the housekeeper appeared. She told me that the Germans were in the town, and added that Sir John French had left behind a valuable gold pencil. This was given to me, and great was French's joy when I handed it back to him early the next morning with my report. The Germans were so exhausted by their forced march that they

were all half asleep, and I left the town unmolested and only once challenged.

I was sent to the French rearguard on our right, and there, too, I saw fearless devotion against overwhelming odds. On one occasion the French general of division, not only without orders, but against orders, turned and fought. The Germans, flushed with victory, were advancing with little precaution. Consequently they suffered frightful losses from the French seventy-fives, and the French infantry, of their own accord, before orders reached them, advanced on the enemy and completed their discomfiture. I recorded in my diary at the time: "I did not know men could be so brave."

After witnessing this fight I returned to the French General, who was on the right of his line, at the moment when an officer came galloping up with a despatch. The General read it, and, as he handed it to me, he stamped his foot on the ground and burst into tears. I think that was the only time during the war I saw a Frenchman cry—they were surprisingly phlegmatic and unemotional: the exact opposite of the old-fashioned conception of the French character. The message read: "You will retire with all speed to——" naming a place twenty miles in rear. No doubt the order was necessary, but it was a bitter blow to the General and his men, who had visions of continuing their victorious advance. By great good fortune evening was falling when this message came, and practically the whole of this gallant division was extricated, by a forced march, from the dangerous salient into which it had thrust itself. Foch told me long afterwards that he often thought that this wild attack was the first mutterings of the glory of the Marne.

I had a fortunate experience when returning from this battle to our headquarters. Although I did not know it, the German cavalry had advanced round the left flank of the French division, between their force and Sir Douglas Haig's. There happened to be a thick fog as I drove along at about 10 o'clock at night. In front of me I saw cavalry on the move. I was

glad to see them, thinking they were our own, but when I got about half-way along the little column I heard the men conversing in German! They were lolling in their saddles utterly exhausted; some of them were actually asleep on their holsters. As I neared the head of the troop someone shouted: "Wer da!" With my heart in my mouth, I replied, very loudly and determinedly: "Gros   g  n  ral stab," and proceeded on my way.

I found Sir John French at Compi  gne at 2 o'clock the next morning. He was waiting up for me, and was glad to get my report, for, indeed, the French counter-attack was of priceless value to him. He gave me some supper and talked very frankly about the retreat. From all the reports which had reached him, he did not see how Paris could be saved. Then, as always, he had the great merit of being able to put himself in the other man's place. From that he did not make scientific deductions, but formed what I can only describe as intuitions, and I can truly say that during the retreat he was nearly always right. He anticipated with uncanny prescience that Von Kluck would be ordered to assist the force on his left before entering Paris, but firmly believed that the German would have the nerve to disregard his orders and march into Paris while the way was open.

A little later Sir John French sent me to see General Gallieni in Paris. He had just received information that the French Government were leaving Paris for the south, and that General Gallieni had been appointed Governor of Paris with plenary powers. I had been out to our rearguard that morning, and had seen the German advance-guard, and knowing exactly where they were, I realised that they could not reach Paris in any force for at least another day and a half, and that there would be no risk of my being overtaken with the important message I was carrying, even if I was held up on the road by refugees, as I anticipated. It was the most heart-breaking journey I have ever taken. Ever since the beginning of the retreat from Mons one had seen, on the long, straight road, on the west of the For  t de Mormal especially, and all other roads leading south

and west, the melancholy procession of refugees from the farms and villages which the German host was approaching. There they were in tens and hundreds; here on this broad road they were in tens of thousands. I managed to get along, often on the outside of the line of trees, but I was frequently stopped, I spoke to these unhappy people—old men, women and children of all ages—trudging along the road with such household goods as they could hurriedly collect piled on carts and wagons of every description. There was terror in their eyes and bitter anger in their hearts, but there was no panic.

It was part of the German plan to spread most terrible reports of the atrocities committed, with the object of preventing francs-tireurs from opposing them, and, by spreading terror, shortening resistance. German prisoners told us later on that they were fully justified in spreading these reports, as it was only thus that the war could be shortened and humanity saved. Of course, the reports disseminated were far worse than the actual deeds done, though without doubt there was much cruelty, but whatever the truth may be, there is no doubt of the complete success of the plan so far as it involved the flight of the French populace. They said to me: "We will go to the Atlantic Ocean, and if need be, we will drown ourselves in it, sooner than be contaminated by the Boche."

I often think that when English people complain of the French because of their continued bitter feeling against the Germans, they do not take into account the dreadful happenings, affecting hundreds of thousands of these people, in those terrible days. I, an Englishman, can say quite frankly and sincerely, "We must forgive, and if we can, forget," but if my soul had been trans-migrated into a French mother or father as I saw them on this *via dolorosa*, I never could say it while there was breath in my body.

On the way I passed practically no soldiers, and, indeed, as everyone now knows, there was nothing to prevent the Germans from marching into Paris as soon as they could get there.

At last I arrived at the Porte de Vincennes. Gallieni had already organised a body of men to divert the unending stream of refugees to the environs of Paris. My drive through Paris at about midday was an extraordinary experience. There was no one in the streets. When I say no one I mean, literally, not a single human being or vehicle. I went to the British Embassy in the Faubourg St. Honoré, but failed to make anyone hear; thence to the Ritz Hotel, where I was determined to have a bath and a shave before interviewing the Governor of Paris, but the Ritz, too, was shut and locked. Fortunately, I bethought me of going to the Hotel Lotti, in the Rue Castiglione, where, after much banging on the door with a heavy spanner, I induced someone to open it about two inches. It was Mons. Lotti himself who let me in and provided me with the bath, of which I stood so much in need. He told me that the Government had left by special train the night before, that it was universally believed that the Germans would march in at 10 o'clock that morning, and that when I banged at the door he assumed that it was the beginning of the German occupation. He told me where to find General Gallieni, and after a never-to-be-forgotten meal of chicken and eggs, I betook myself there. I had met General Gallieni before the war, although he was not an intimate friend like General Foch. He was quite delighted to see me because I brought him the latest news. I gave him Sir John French's letter, which was very short, containing nothing of value to the enemy if captured, and then proceeded to tell him all that Sir John French had told me to communicate—the position of our army and its intended movements; the position of the German forces in front of us so far as they were known; I asked what were his orders and his intentions; and how could we best co-operate. Sir John French had said to me (he had wonderful intuition in these matters): "I am sure that Gallieni will receive precise instructions what to do under all possible circumstances. He is a lion-hearted man, as well as a wise one, and I doubt very much whether he will have committed himself to obey

orders based on a situation which may have completely altered by the time the moment comes." I told Gallieni this, and I can see him now, standing in front of the fireplace and saying, with a great laugh: "But, my dear, that is exactly what happened! Last night I went to see the Government off in their special train to Bordeaux. I had already received instructions, and while waiting for the train to start, these instructions were repeated to me. I did not agree with them, and had already said so. What is the good of giving me plenary powers to act for the best, and then give me precise orders to retire under certain circumstances, when I may know that it is far better for Paris and for France to advance? So I just said: 'I shall do my duty.' The question was again put to me, and I again replied: 'I shall do my duty.' At that moment a gamin starts to shout: 'Les Boches arrivent! Les Boches arrivent!' Immediately there was great commotion, and the train began to start. A voice again inquired: 'You will obey the instructions?' and once more I replied: 'I shall do my duty.'" I said to the General: "That was a very useful gamin. Where did you find him?" and he laughed, and said: "I don't know."

He then described to me the arrangements he was making to create quite a considerable force of riflemen; that they were mostly men over age and young lads, but that he knew they would obey orders and fight like tigers. He told me where Manoury was, and that he was in close touch with him. I asked him who would be in command, Manoury or himself, and he replied: "Manoury and I understand one another: there will be no difficulty."

All the world now knows the part played by Gallieni and Manoury in bringing about "the crowning mercy of the Marne."

Gallieni was a most impressive figure. In spite of all the desperate wounds he had received at Mars la Tour in the war of 1870, and, in spite of his age, he was as vigorous and alert in his conversation with me as a man of twenty-five. There

can be no doubt that his valiant spirit inspired the levies he commanded. They fought with fanatical courage, literally hand to hand. Some days later, near Meaux, I saw a field covered with dead French and Germans almost or quite touching, and in one case with their fingers still grasping each others' throats. Amongst the heroic figures of the war stands Gallieni!

Many years afterwards I saw Von Kluck in his little lodging in Berlin. Lord D'Abernon had kindly arranged the interview. Von Kluck was altogether charming, and paid the most glowing tribute to the valour of our Expeditionary Force that I have ever heard. "Nevertheless," he said, "if I had had a blind eye and a deaf ear like your Nelson at Copenhagen, I could have entered Paris, and I now know that had I done so we should have won the war."

CHAPTER XIII

Antwerp—The King of the Belgians—Winston in Charge—Bridges and Girouard—General Paris and the Baron de Guise—Telephone Orders from Kitchener—The Retreat.

THEN came the glorious moment when the British Army turned and advanced north-east. No one who has not seen it can believe the extraordinary difference between an army in retreat and an army ordered to advance. I was allowed to keep a diary at this time, and I find recorded in it: "The happiest day in my life; we marched towards the rising sun."

The Germans surrendered to us in great numbers. Exhausted and disappointed they frequently allowed themselves to be captured by but a few men. It was the only time in the war I saw them hopelessly dispirited. But it was not for long. At La Ferté-sous-Jouarre we met with strong resistance, and for more than twenty-four hours failed to force the passage of the Marne.

I was detailed to accompany the Fourth Division, and having reported the situation, was sent back with further orders to the troops in the town. It was confused fighting. The Germans were securely established in one part of the town, on the south side of the Marne, ourselves in another part. As I ran down the hill I was greeted by a storm of bullets, so turned and ran into a side street. There I found a sergeant and eight men, also on their way to the village. The sergeant said to me: "Shall we run for it one by one?" I said: "No, we have a better chance if we all go together. You blow your whistle and we will all run down." We had only about eighty yards to go to another side road, from which we could get into the town and rejoin our own troops. The sergeant blew his whistle and

off we started. Rifle and machine-gun fire was intense, and came from some concealed point less than a hundred and fifty yards away. When I got to the side road, in safety, but with a bullet through my hat and another through my stick, I looked round for the rest. Everyone of them was lying dead on the roadway. There was desperate house-to-house fighting in the village of La Ferté, and our casualties were very heavy, but in the end opposition was overcome, and we crossed the Marne.

The French came up on our left, and together we crossed the Aisne next evening at Venizel, and then by steep slopes to a line, which we occupied, covering the villages on each side of St. Marguerite.

On the crest we found a line of entrenchments strongly held by fresh German troops. We made repeated attacks, but could not dislodge them from the line in which, little though we knew it, the Germans were to remain for four long years.

It was at this time, on September 22nd, that I received the following letter from Winston Churchill:

Admiralty, Whitehall

20/9/14

My Dear Jack,

The days pass in an unbroken succession of events and decisions; and I have hardly had time to write the letters of sympathy which our severe losses among cherished friends demand.

I was glad to hear from Captain Hankey some account of your exploits. I hope you will not expose yourself unnecessarily to danger.

Here the feeling is absolutely united; and running breast-high for a prolonged and relentless struggle. There will, I think, be no difficulty in putting a million men in the field in the spring of 1915. But we must keep the necessary minimum of officers to train them.

I rejoice more than I can say at the splendid deeds of the

army and the military reputé which our country has by a few weeks of their achievements altogether revived.

The Navy has been thrilled by all their prowess and valour. We sit still on the cold-blooded game and can, I think, keep it up indefinitely.

Doom has fallen upon Prussian military arrogance. Time and determination are all that is needed.

*Yours ever,
W.*

Meanwhile a diversion was decided on.

On the 25th of September I was sent to Dunkirk to find out what was being done by the naval force that had been landed there. To my great surprise I found Winston, then First Lord of the Admiralty, and had a long talk with him, he explaining all the plans. I went with him to the small cruiser in which he returned to England, and there saw F. E. Smith, who told me he hoped soon to come out to the Front. I told Winston before he left that I could not understand why we did not put the whole Territorial Force into Northern France and Belgium, and especially into Antwerp. At that time Lille was unoccupied by the enemy, and it seemed to me essential to deny Ostend, Zeebrugge, and, above all, Antwerp to the enemy. I knew great forces could be brought against us, but the power of the defence is so extraordinary that I believe we could have beaten off any attacks. I returned to Fère en Tardenois after three days' absence, and having reported on the Dunkirk situation to Sir John French, resumed my daily visits to the front line of the Fourth Division. Our position there had been so greatly strengthened that the Germans had given up trying to attack it; the lines of trenches were only from 200 to 300 yards apart; it was apparent that stalemate had come. On the 3rd October, I received orders again to go round to the north and represent Sir John French with the naval and military forces operating in the neighbourhood of Ostend. My instructions

from Sir John French were to send reports direct to him by aeroplane. He also told me that he had informed Lord Kitchener of my mission, and that he would probably communicate with me by telephone at Antwerp from time to time, as indeed proved to be the case. The Antwerp force was not under Sir John French's orders, which was a great mistake. When I arrived at Dunkirk, where I expected to find headquarters, I found that Winston, with a naval brigade, had gone to Antwerp, and ascertained that Rawlinson's Seventh Division, had landed at Ostend and Zeebrugge. This was news indeed, so I went on with all speed to Antwerp. I had with me, as on many other occasions, an officer of the Intelligence Corps—Greenwood by name—who throughout the proceedings behaved with rare coolness and resolution. We arrived in Antwerp at 10 in the evening, five days before it fell, and drove to the principal hotel. There, sure enough, I found Winston, and learned from him the desperate nature of the enterprise in which we were engaged. We had with us of Englishmen General Paris and about 3,000 men of the Naval Division. More were coming the next day, so that our force would consist of about 3,000 Marines and 4,000 Naval Volunteers. We also had Tom Bridges, a host in himself, and Sir Percy Girouard, who had come over with a view to organising, if possible, some heavy artillery. The Belgian Field Army of about 30,000 or 40,000 men was in Antwerp; it was intended that if evacuation were decided on we should cover their retirement across the Scheldt along the Dutch frontier to Ostend and beyond. There was also the garrison of Antwerp, numbering about 20,000.

When I arrived, the Field Army and part of the garrison was holding the outer line of forts beyond the River Nith, but it was known that the Germans had brought up their 42-centimetre guns, and it was anticipated that they would smash up the forts, as they had done at Liège, Namur, and Maubeuge.

Winston told me he believed that with Rawlinson's infantry

and such other troops as could be got from England we could, with the help of the Belgians, exhausted though they were, hold the city and defy any forces that could be brought against us. It may well be that he was right in his plan and that it would have succeeded: we could probably have held the place for many weeks, and if so, it would have altered the whole course of the war. However, it was decided otherwise.

The next morning I drove out to the line of defences on the River Nith, to which the Belgians and the naval brigade had fallen back. All the main forts were holding on except one in the centre, which had been demolished by the 42 centimetre shells and evacuated by the survivors of the garrison. We were busy entrenching ourselves on the line on the Nith, and it was not a bad position. The naval men were working very hard, and had a fine spirit. I came back in the afternoon and had a long interview with the King of the Belgians. He told me that he doubted our ability to hold Antwerp, because, as he said, his troops had not yet recovered from the desperate fighting at Liège and subsequent engagements. Moreover, the gigantic German guns and high explosive shells dominated the Belgian Artillery.

For an hour he plied me with questions about our experiences during the retreat, and in the subsequent advance. He struck me as a very good and a very brave man, but the saddest man I have ever seen. He said that all would not be lost when Antwerp fell, even if the whole of his country were over-run and every building destroyed, provided always that there was a Belgian Army in the field at the end. He said, "However long the war goes on there must be peace at last, and if, when the combatants sit round the table, I or my representative is there, representing the Belgian Army still fighting, my country will survive; otherwise it will be dead." I agreed to this, and said that as England could send him but little further help it seemed to me that his duty was to leave Antwerp with his field army as soon as might be; he replied that with a heavy heart, that was what he

proposed to do. Meantime, Major Gordon, the Duke of Wellington's private secretary, who was Chairman of the Belgian Refugees' Committee had arranged for me to stay at the house of the Civil Governor. That evening I went up to the front line with Winston. There was considerable rifle fire, but the position seemed fairly secure. On our return to Antwerp we found General Rawlinson, also a telegram from the War Office for Winston, informing him that it was impossible to send large reinforcements to Antwerp.

The only question then was, how to conduct the evacuation of the city. We had a long conference with Rawlinson, and all plans were settled. I pleaded that we should hold on with what troops we could, indefinitely, escaping as best we could at the last minute, with what survivors there might be. This would have involved holding on to the inner line and withstanding formidable infantry assaults; and incidentally the complete destruction of the City of Antwerp. It is true that the city was full of German sympathisers, but at the first shell they would all run away, which proved to be the case. However, the conference decided otherwise, and we shall never know who was right. From the moment I arrived it was apparent that the whole business was in Winston's hands.

He dominated the whole place; the King, ministers, soldiers, sailors. So great was his influence that I am convinced that with 20,000 British troops he could have held Antwerp against almost any onslaught. But it was clearly out of the question for the First Lord of the Admiralty to stay behind with a small forlorn hope, and, characteristically, he would not allow others to take a risk he could not take himself.

The King had left earlier in the day and all the ministers.

The next morning we had a conference with de Guise and Dossin, commanding a portion of the Belgian field army holding the left sector of the defences, and I then went out to the line of trenches, just north of the River Nith. The Belgian sector was being heavily shelled, and they suffered

severe losses. On the British sector the fire was less severe.

The marine colonel told me that their casualties had been 180 that morning. All our line was held, but portions of the Belgian line on our left had given way to a prepared position one mile nearer the city. I then went to meet two brigades of the Royal Naval Division, who had arrived by train; I never saw a finer lot of men, and was impressed with the cheerful energy of the younger officers.

Commodore Backhouse seemed a good man and had the confidence of his men. These men arrived just in time, for as they marched out towards the line of defence, news came that the Belgians on the extreme right had been driven in. All the orders given had to be altered, for it was necessary to occupy a line two miles nearer the city; but the men cheerfully went to the positions assigned to them, although everybody knew that they were involved in an enterprise that might well become a débâcle. I had to guide Backhouse's brigade, and duly took them to their trenches. I then went to the Belgian right, and arrived at a moment when the infantry were retiring from somewhat heavy shell fire. The position was most critical; for the infantry in question were covering two brigades of Belgian field artillery, who were thus left unsupported, with the German front line of infantry within 1,000 yards. I found the colonel commanding the infantry brigade, who most gallantly ran forward and rallied his men. We got them back to a fairly good position with a natural cover, when they opened fire with good effect.

I then went to the artillery general and told him that the infantry were now holding on. Meantime, a German line of skirmishers had emerged from a wood about 700 yards away. My Belgian friend was quite unperturbed, and opened fire on them with all his guns. I should say that a large proportion of the Germans were killed; certainly all were hit, and the attack completely died away. At nightfall I returned to the hotel and met Winston. He had made good dis-

positions in consultation with de Guise, and was preparing to leave.

We received a telephone message from Capper at Ghent, from which it seemed likely that he could safely get away, so he started off by motor at midnight.

Girouard came to me and said he hated leaving us in this forlorn hope, but could he help? I said, "No," plainly he could not possibly help. He begged me to take £100 in gold which he had on him, saying that it might be useful to induce the captain of a tug to hazard the crossing of the Scheldt at a critical time. I would not mind going tiger hunting with Girouard. After Winston and Girouard had gone, I motored out to General Paris's headquarters in a château, about one mile inside of the second line of defence, to which we had then fallen back. His staff told me that they knew that the Belgians could not hold on, and that our enterprise was pretty desperate. I replied that we had got to hold on until the Belgian field army got away. I then drove out to the line of trenches with Tom Bridges, and together we walked along a considerable sector of the line. Vast sums had been spent on this second line; there was a perfect field of fire, nine forts at intervals of about three-quarters of a mile; searchlights in every fort, a perfectly flat field of fire; but, unfortunately, only small calibre guns in the forts, and not very much ammunition for them. We found the men all awake, standing in the trenches with loaded rifles. Bridges tried to persuade the officers to let most of the men go to sleep, and with success in some cases, but unfortunately not in all. There was no shelling and only an occasional rifle shot from the enemy. And so back into the centre of the city at about 4 a.m.

The next morning Bridges and I went round the whole line, and reported back to General Paris on the situation. The Germans had made no further advance, but were shelling the trenches with some persistence. We had conferences with de Guise, and made many arrangements with regard to the water

supply, entrenching tools, and so forth. That evening the civil governor gave a banquet in my honour. There were about twelve persons present, all soldiers, or relations of the Baron. After dinner I saw the Baroness, who was laid up with sinovitis, in a gorgeous boudoir. She asked me whether the city would be bombarded. I assured her there was little chance of it that night. I had arranged to go out to the trenches at 10, and as I left she asked me, "Can you promise me there will be no bombardment?" I said, "I am certain there can be no bombardment to-night"; and so I motored to the hotel to pick up Tom Bridges. While we were dealing with some correspondence that had come in, we heard the sound of the first shell, which burst in the square, quite near to us, and was the first of the many thousands that fell in the town that night. Almost at once there was a scene of indescribable panic. I went out into the street and saw thousands of people streaming by. The lights in the city had gone out, and the streets were dark, but for the flares of the fires which the shells were starting. I got into the motor and drove out to General Paris's headquarters. It was a difficult drive, for the shells had broken down all the tramway wires, and in some cases the heat of the burning houses was so great that it was difficult to get by without being burned. At headquarters I found that all was quiet on the line of defence. I drove out to our trenches, and found everything well organised, and most of the men resting. It was a strange scene! The perpetual shriek of shells passing hundreds of feet over our heads, and spurts of flame bursting up in parts of the city, five miles away behind us. Meantime, not a single shot or shell was being fired at or from the trenches, and the searchlights made a blaze of light over the cleared area to our front. I thought the best thing to do was to get some sleep, so motored back to the house of the civil governor, having often to go by side roads to avoid places where the main road was blocked by burning houses and fallen stones, and found the Baron and his household in refuge in the cellar.

Major Gordon, who was with me, and to whose unselfish devotion I owe a debt I can never repay, volunteered to sleep or rest by the telephone on the ground floor, while I went to bed, Smith sleeping on a rug at the door of my room.

I knew everything depended upon being fresh the next day, so took off all my clothes and went to bed in a lordly four-poster bed, but feared I should never get to sleep, arranging to be called at daybreak. I took the time of the bursting shells, and found that they dropped at regular intervals of three seconds. While I was wondering whether it would be possible to go to sleep under such strange circumstances, I fell fast asleep and did not wake until Smith shook me two and a half hours later.

It was the most useful sleep I ever had. So out to the trenches again, where all was comparatively quiet, although in one sector there was pretty severe rifle fire from the enemy, but at long range from the edge of a wood 1,000 yards away.

As a result of the bombardment, fires were burning in many parts of the city, and viewed from the trenches a great pall of black smoke hung over the city, pierced in places by yellow sheets of flame. One extraordinary lucky thing for me was, that in all these trips through the burning town I never punctured a tyre, and though often held up by shell-holes, broken electric light standards, fallen houses and wires, always managed to get through. At 9 o'clock I returned to de Guise's headquarters, where a conference was held. All the necessary orders for evacuation if and when it became imperative were then settled. At 11 a.m. I received a telegram from Lord Kitchener, asking me for news of the situation, and conveying the congratulations of the King on the defence we had put up. I replied in a telegram to Lord Kitchener, and also a telegram to the Prime Minister, thanking the King for his message on behalf of General Paris and his force, adding that the situation was better than on the previous day, owing to the fact that the bombardment had done comparatively little damage to the fortifications or the troops, and had had the great merit of chasing

away the whole civilian population, including the dangerous German element in our rear. I then went to the extreme right of the line and found it intact, and returned to General Paris. Headquarters had then been removed from the centre of the town, where our previous conferences had been held, down to the pilotage near to the river. At that time, 2 o'clock, we still hoped to hold on, at least until the next day. Most of the Belgian field army had crossed the Scheldt by the two bridges of boats, but there was much still to be done to enable the rest to get away, and in order to destroy all the stores which would be of value to the enemy. It was at this time that Major Gordon bethought him of the excellent idea to buy £120 worth of chocolate for the 2,500 marines and naval volunteers, whom I had been commissioned to accompany in the event of a retirement being ordered. He bought it and distributed much of it to the troops, to which fact in great measure they owed their safety.

At 3 o'clock I went, as ordered, to the central telephone office, which was established in a cellar of the General Post Office, and had a long conversation with Lord Kitchener. I described to him fully the situation and events of the day, told him that the line was intact, though threatened in many places. I said, too, that I still believed we could hold on for several days despite all our difficulties. He told me to come back to the telephone at 5 o'clock, as the government were considering the whole question. I returned to General de Guise's headquarters, adjoining General Paris's, and there receive the unwelcome news that the whole of the left sector of the line, namely, forts 1, 2 and 3 had been evacuated.

I went back to the telephone office, remembering Lord Kitchener's wish to speak to me. There was one operator left; for by this time many of the surrounding buildings were on fire. I asked him whether it was possible that I could get through to the Admiralty—for I thought that was the best chance—within three minutes, for I could not spare more time.

He said he thought he could arrange it. Within two minutes we were through to London, not to the Admiralty, but to Lord Kitchener at the War Office. He spoke to me for a moment, and then handed the telephone to Colonel Fitzgerald, who, he said, could hear better. Colonel Fitzgerald conveyed to me the Government's decision that we were to evacuate the town with the British forces; that this was a direct order and must not be disobeyed. I said that by a quarter of an hour we had anticipated the Government's decision, owing to the left sector of the line having been driven in, and our inability to restore it.

I begged Lord Kitchener to use every endeavour to assist our journey from the left bank of the Scheldt towards Ostend.

I told him of the arrangements we had made for trains to meet us at St. Nicholas, and suggested that alternative trains might be ready at another station nearer the Dutch frontier, in case the Germans had got through to St. Nicholas before we arrived there. I asked Colonel Fitzgerald to write down the plans for our retirement as settled by General de Guise and General Paris, and then asked him to send a telegram to my children to say I was well. Coming out, I met Colonel Bridges, who had just returned from the front line, and ascertained from him that he was to have charge of the southern bridge, I explained to him that I would cross last of all, probably about 10 or 11 at night, if all went well, by the northern bridge. I got out to the centre sector at about 6 o'clock and walked all along the line of trenches. There was a little shooting, only a stray rifle shot now and then, but the Germans could plainly be seen in the woods about 1,000 yards away.

At nightfall the commander of the sector received news from the right that the evacuation of the trenches was complete. The trenches on our left had been evacuated at about 7 o'clock. When it seemed likely that all the others would be clear away, word was passed down the line by pre-arranged plan, for the evacuation to commence. The men had no warning, but they behaved with extraordinary coolness and courage. There was

the great host in front of them, whose presence was only shown by an occasional rifle shot and by the unending stream of shells whistling over their heads. Behind them the blazing city through which they had to retire, covered by a dense pall of black smoke; beyond that again the broad ribbon of the Scheldt, brilliantly lighted up by immense flames from the huge stores of oil which had been set on fire. However, they all moved quietly and silently away, while I stayed behind with an officer and 100 men, who kept up an intermittent rifle fire. The officer then withdrew all of them except four men, who kept on shooting; finally I put these four in the car and drove away. It seemed to me certain that the Germans would follow us up, and indeed, a few of them did; had they done so in large numbers we should have been in desperate case, for we had no friends nearer than the other side of the Scheldt, and a burning city to traverse. But for some reason, which I cannot explain, the Germans let us go comparatively unmolested. A few men were hit by bullets, and some were killed by shell as we went through the town, but so far as I could ascertain, not more than 20 or 30 altogether. We had 2,500 men with us, and with them we marched through the absolutely deserted city. We arrived at the bridge about 10 o'clock, and found that everyone had crossed; but there was a party of Belgian soldiers and police under the command of a most competent and courageous officer, who had directed the whole proceedings from the start and had kept good order.

After reporting to General Paris I drove back across the bridge of boats to see if there were any stragglers still coming down the road which led to it. I found two exhausted men who had been left behind and brought them back. We were the last to cross that bridge.

So ended the Antwerp episode, so far as I was concerned. Looking back on it, I am positive that the expedition was worth while, even on so small a scale. From all I learned and all I saw, I think it very possible that had Winston not brought

his naval men to Antwerp the Belgian Field Army would not have escaped. Had Winston been vigorously supported, even thus late in the day, the Germans would have been forced to detach such large forces that their advance on Ypres would have been stayed, and might have been prevented altogether. Meanwhile there were further divisions of our Territorial Army who, according to the original plan, were available for this or any other enterprise. The technical difficulty of their not being legally liable for foreign service had already been overcome. But the fatal error, disregarding the emphatic decision of the Committee of Imperial Defence that invasion was impossible, prejudiced our offensive power at this critical moment. As the thing happened, the outstanding features were the extraordinary effect of Winston's presence in heartening up the defence; the steadfastness of the King, the courage, coolness and resource of Bridges, without whom the retirement might well have been a débâcle; the extraordinary good behaviour under the most trying circumstances of the Naval men. They were asked to undertake the most difficult of all military manœuvres without warning, namely, a retirement by night in face of an overwhelmingly powerful enemy, through a burning town, the approaches to which were known to be mined, across a great river by a bridge of boats constantly in danger of catching fire, or being struck by the innumerable shells that were falling all round. All this, with little food and after two nights without sleep, and yet they never murmured or complained. The final retirement from the line of trenches was conducted in absolute silence, to which they owed their lives, and with a complete absence of panic. Anyone might well be proud to lead such men in any theatre of war.

CHAPTER XIV

First Battle of Ypres—Admiral Ronarck and the Defence of Dixmüde—Ramsay Macdonald: His Arrest and Adventures in the Front Line—Christmas 1914—De Castlenau: the Wisest of the French Generals.

I REJOINED Sir John French from Antwerp at Abbeville and gave him my report. His comment was that even if the Antwerp venture had failed it had been well worth while, for it had, without doubt, delayed the German advance on the Channel ports. He also told me that our little Army would certainly have to bear the brunt of the coming attack. He went off that same night to join our advancing troops near Hazebrouck.

The next morning I was sent off to get touch with Rawlinson's Seventh Division, coming from the north to join the rest of the army, which had moved round from the south. There was a good deal of open warfare, in which our cavalry bore a very distinguished part. I saw much of this fighting, and am quite sure that but for the cavalry we should never have established our line east of Ypres, Bailleul and Béthune. I used to pass through Ypres almost daily at this period, the Cloth Hall and the Cathedral—especially the former—made it one of the most beautiful little towns in the world.

At last the line began to be established, and both sides set to work digging themselves in. But the Germans dug themselves in much more zealously, because they meant to stay there, whereas we and the French still thought that we should push them back.

General Foch had been sent by Joffre to command the army

of the north, and accordingly established his headquarters on the top of the high hill of Cassel. French sent me to see Foch almost daily, on my way up to the front line. Foch said to me one day: "Frappez! Frappez Frappez! C'est mon idée." He asked me what I thought about it, and I said it was all very well to bang at the Germans, providing you lost fewer men than the enemy in the process, because I was sure we could not push them back very far. Nearly two years afterwards, on the Somme, Foch, who was commanding the French Army on our right, reminded me of our conversation. He said: "You were right then, but I have learnt my lesson. Attack is impossible, except with a force of artillery, which it must take months to collect, and even then you must have railway sidings and special roads to feed the shells to the guns."

Then came the first battle of Ypres. It was a terrific onslaught, and though our losses were very severe, those of the Germans were frightful. In the closing phases of the battle our men were so exhausted that they were completely dazed, but they resolutely refused to retire, and, throughout, retained their precision of fire.

One evening I had been sent up with a message to our front line. It was bitterly cold and sleet was falling. I failed to find the battalion headquarters whither I had been sent, and, going forward, found myself in a veritable hail of bullets. So I toppled into a little trench, where there was a corporal and two men; four other men were lying dead, having been killed by shell fire, which had been very severe and most accurate. "Here they come!" said the corporal, and, sure enough, a hundred yards away was a great number of advancing Germans. The sleet had turned to snow, but they were so near that one could distinguish them quite clearly. The barrage had lifted, and there was no enemy rifle fire. I see those grey figures now, as I write, trudging along towards us through the snow; some with their heads bent down, others with their left arms shielding their heads, bravely marching on, but, for some curious

reason, hardly one of them lifting his head to look death in the face. I snatched one of our dead men's rifles, and the four of us shot as fast and as straight as we could. Though there were but four of us the Germans in front had no chance at all. The nearest man who escaped death or mortal wounds did not get within thirty yards of us. The same thing happened on our right and left, and our thin, straggling line remained intact.

The French on our left displayed equal tenacity. I was sent up with a message to the French Divisional General on our immediate left, on a day when the battle was at its height. When I found the Divisional Headquarters they said the General was further in front; I walked up a narrow road, down which a stream of wounded men, just able to walk, were coming. Presently one heard rifle fire a few hundred yards ahead. I said to a French sergeant, whom I caught up as he was marching forward with a platoon: "Do you know where the general is? I have a message for him." His face lit up with pride as he said: "You will not find our general here. He is with the advance guard—*Oui, oui, le général lui même est toujours avec l'avante garde.*" Sure enough, there he stood in his front line. Without doubt his example was worth a whole brigade of reinforcements.

The defence of Dixmüde by sailors and soldiers, under the command of Admiral Ronarck, is an epic of the war. The little town stood just on the east side of the Yser Canal. The perimeter of the town was surrounded by a deep trench, with some very elementary dug-outs. We had announced that we would hold Ypres; the French said they would hold Dixmüde. It was possible to hold Ypres, as events proved, but it was quite impossible to hold Dixmüde. The town was dominated by high ground at short range. There was only one bridge over the Yser, and the enemy infantry were already sufficiently near to prevent any attempt to make others. There had been no time to make shelters capable of withstanding heavy shells, and any effort to get security by

digging deep was frustrated by inflowing water. The garrison had been hastily improvised, and consisted of units of different nations and different armies, who had never met before. A portion of the Belgian Field Army and some battalions of Algerian and Senegalese troops were added to the sailors whom Admiral Ronarck had brought with him. But in spite of all these manifold disadvantages the Admiral contrived to imbue his command with such indestructible courage that for weeks, although they made repeated attacks, the German infantry failed to reach the last defence. His line was driven back, and ever back, until at the end it was only the small perimeter of Dixmüde that was held. In the final assault the troops stood their ground, and were killed almost to a man in hand-to-hand combat.

It was my duty to visit Admiral Ronarck on many occasions at his headquarters at, what was termed, Dixmüde Carrefour, and from there to go forward to the front line. The last time was the evening before Dixmüde fell. I arrived at dusk with a message from Sir John French to the Admiral and the troops under his command. Having delivered our message to the admiral, I walked with my orderly officer, Greenwood, along the road leading from the Carrefour to the bridge over the Yser. Very big shells were raining on the doomed town, and by the time we got there, every house was in flames. The streets were quite deserted and bullets were singing along them. The heat from the burning houses on each side was so great that we had to run down the middle of the street. Dead bodies were lying about in great numbers, and, to add to the horror of the scene, quantities of pigs, mad with fright, were galloping about, making the weirdest noises. Greenwood shot several with his revolver to put them out of their misery.

We managed to reach the front line, as we intended, at the point where the trenches occupied by the French sailors met those occupied by a portion of the Belgian Army. Somehow we all knew that the final attack was impending. The Belgian

captain asked me to address his men in the trench. I have made a great many speeches in my time, but never under such strange conditions as these. Thirteen inch shells were dropping with a continuous roar, but I managed to shout to them Sir John French's message, and shook hands all round. Then we started to return by the way we had come. The shelling was more severe and the rifle fire more intense, but one certain rule of war is that it is never so dangerous as it seems, and we got back to Admiral Ronarck's headquarters unharmed. That night Dixmude fell.

About this time a very odd episode occurred. On my return from the French front line one night, I took my report to Sir John French. He thanked me, and discussed various points arising from the report for five minutes or so. I told him I had arranged to go back early next morning in order to witness a small attack, based on more or less novel principles. He said: "I am afraid you can't do that. I have got quite a different job for you. Isn't Ramsay Macdonald a friend of yours?" I replied: "Yes, a very intimate friend," He said: "What do you suppose some idiot at Dunkirk has done? He has put him under arrest, and this at a time when it is vitally important to secure the co-operation of everyone in England who counts." At this moment the Adjutant-General, General Macready arrived, and confirmed the report which Sir John had only just received, that Ramsay MacDonald was indeed under arrest. He had come to France in order to visit a hospital, run by the Society of Friends, a few miles behind the line between Dunkirk and Ypres. Either he had not got a permit, or it was not in order, and some officious person—French or English—had placed him under arrest.

It was there and then arranged, that orders should be sent for his immediate release, that I should meet him and express the regret of Sir John French and the Adjutant-General, and show him something of the front line, before taking him on to his hospital. I arranged that the place of meeting should be

Poperinghe, at ten o'clock the next morning. Accordingly, on a fine, cold autumn morning, I arrived at Poperinghe, and found the Square entirely deserted, except for a Red Cross motor ambulance, standing in the centre. I drove up to it and shouted, and there emerged Ramsay MacDonald. I told him how sorry everybody concerned was at the mistake, making light of the episode. MacDonald took it very well, and, after a word or two of serious protest, laughed the matter off.

I then invited him to get into my car and come and see something of the front line, before going to the hospital. With this he readily agreed, and we started off along the road, known so well to hundreds of thousands of Britons, which led between high poplars to Ypres. The ambulance followed about half a mile in rear. There was an occasional shell falling in Ypres, but very few, so we drove slowly through the town, saw the damage done, and went out by the Menin Gate, to the open country beyond. From the first ridge I pointed out the approximate front line to Ramsay MacDonald. He wanted to go further, but I told him there was not time, also that civilians visiting hospitals were not supposed to get under rifle fire. It did not quite turn out that way.

At that time some of us who had to go from Ypres towards Dixmude used to take the road which runs along the west bank of the Yser Canal. This road saved a long detour, and except for a few shell holes had an excellent surface. It was within range of the enemy artillery of course, but for the first few miles, was screened by trees and out of view. For two miles approaching Liserne the road was in view, but out of rifle range. Even if the Germans did bother to open fire on a single car, by the simple expedient of driving alternately very fast and very slow the chance of being hit was negligible. Having travelled along this road many times I elected to drive Ramsay MacDonald that way. All went well, except that there were rather more shell holes to be negotiated than when I had passed that way a fortnight before, until we came to the part of the

road in view of the enemy. We sailed along for a mile or so, when, to my astonishment we came under severe rifle and machine gun fire. The bonnet, wind screen and mud guards were hit, but the car kept going, and by great good fortune neither of us was touched. I stopped the car just short of Liserne Bridge, by a low bank which just, but only just, screened us from direct fire. I said: "Tumble out, Ramsay, we must get into this ditch on the side of the road," which we accordingly did, in double quick time. Looking over the bank I saw the French front line about four hundred yards in front of us, across the canal. The German front line was clearly to be seen about two hundred yards beyond. At that moment a number of batteries of French Seventy-fives opened a tremendous rapid fire on the German trenches. Simultaneously the French infantry rose and ran forward. Everyone hates being left alone in a fight, so I shouted to Ramsay MacDonald to follow me, ran across the bridge with him, and jumped breathlessly into a support trench, full of French soldiers. The French were astonished beyond measure to see an English colonel with a civilian jumping into their trench. One man said we were spies, and might as well be shot, but I crawled along to an officer about five yards away, and explained the position to him. He then expounded the situation to me. The Germans had made an attack the night before, and had advanced their line up to the point where we saw them. We had arrived just at the moment when the counter attack was being delivered. The Germans had few machine guns; their heavy artillery could not fire on us, because they did not know where the respective forces were: the French Seventy-fives made wonderful practice, and, as a result, for one of the few times in my experience, the daylight attack was a complete success. The French occupied the German trenches, killing and capturing many of the enemy, while Ramsay MacDonald and I were sitting in the support trench.

Then, as so often happens, there was a complete lull in the

firing; the artillery unable to fire until they had ascertained the position of the contending parties, and the rifle fire dying away while the infantry started digging and consolidating their new positions. I said to MacDonald: "Now is our time to get away and make for your hospital." We walked to the end of the trench, where it cut the road. At that moment two French Fusiliers Marins crossed the bridge and came towards us. Both had been wounded, but were returning to the French line. They jumped into our trench to rest, and I gave each of them a cigarette. One man had been shot through the left arm; the other had a finger shot off. A wound in the finger causes extraordinarily acute pain. I have seen the hardiest man scream with agony when shot through the finger, but this sturdy seaman merely replied to my sympathetic remarks that if one of those "Sales Boches" dared to shoot off his finger he was going to get a bit of his own back. "Anyway," he added, "they have invaded and ravished my country; we will go on shooting them until there is not one left." He was a splendid, good-looking lad—a Breton—and it was impossible not to be moved by his gay and dauntless courage. MacDonald and I shook them both by the unwounded hand, then as they ran forward, we rushed across the bridge, jumped into the motor car, and at top speed, swirled round the corner and up the west-going road, over a slight ridge, into safety. A good many bullets sang over our heads, and a few shells hit the road each side of us, but we escaped further damage.

I found the French officer commanding the little force which had made the successful counter attack, and congratulated him. He had a curious composite force, consisting of a few battalions of French Territorial infantry, a brigade of dismounted French Dragoons, and some battalions of Fusiliers Marins, who had been taken from French battleships to reinforce the army.

It was a strange experience to be in the midst of this desperate little fight in company with a man who was destined to become

twice Prime Minister of England. It was wrong of me to have landed a non-combatant on hospital business in such a place, but I had no idea when we started that any serious risk was involved. It is only right to record that during this exciting episode Ramsay MacDonald behaved with the utmost coolness, and, indeed, suggested that we might go forward with the two wounded seamen, instead of endeavouring to return to a place of safety.

I drove on through narrow lanes, blocked with artillery and wagons, and, with some difficulty, found the Friends' Hospital, where I deposited Ramsay MacDonald. He was covered with mud from head to foot, as indeed, was I. They asked him what had happened. But beyond saying, with truth, that he had fallen out of the motor car, he declined, as they say in police reports: "To give any further account of his movements."

He returned to England next day, and in a public speech, while maintaining his, to me, inexplicable attitude towards the war, paid eloquent tribute to the astonishing courage of the combatants, especially the French, whom he had seen.

This road was unfortunate to another visitor. Jack Pease—now Lord Gainford—during a visit to the same Friends' Hospital, was asked by the Prime Minister and Lord Kitchener to report on an epidemic which had broken out amongst the troops in this extreme northern sector. We travelled north by the same road, all being quiet. On our return towards Ypres, after passing Liserne, half a dozen big shells burst a few hundred yards in front of us. It was nearly dark, and we almost ran into a huge obstruction in the road. It was one of the few remaining houses, which had been knocked bodily into the middle of the road. After half an hour's labour we managed to get the car to climb right over the top of the ruins, twelve or fifteen feet high, down the other side and so to Ypres.

At the close of the first battle of Ypres I was sent to the French front, and, returning very late with my report, went to

sleep in my lodgings at about 3 a.m. In the morning I was woken by a gentle voice repeatedly addressing me by name. At last I opened my eyes, and, with a shock of surprise and joy, saw the Prince of Wales. He asked me to lend him a sword in order that he might attend the first part of the funeral service for Lord Roberts—the old Field Marshal, who had come to France *to see* the troops, and especially the Indians, to whom his presence meant so much—had been taken dangerously ill and had died on November 14th, to the grief of the whole army and nation. I found the sword and gave it to the Prince. Before he left he told me of his hope that he might be allowed to see everybody and everything concerned with the actual fighting on the Western Front, in order that he might learn and understand the realities of war. Later in the day I found that there was an elaborate and well-meant conspiracy to prevent the young Prince from getting to the Front Line. I can record that these plans were a complete failure. The Prince had what I may call the “Front Line mind” in the first degree.

Included in the English line was the Indian Army Corps, commanded by that most gallant soldier General Willcocks.

Sir John French was very anxious for the well being of the Indians. He was glad enough to receive such a valuable reinforcement, but he told me that from the start he feared they would never stand the climate of a winter in Flanders.

Many times I was sent to the general's headquarters, with instructions to consult with him as to possible alleviations of the inevitable sufferings of those Eastern men, in the bitter cold and muddy trenches of northern Europe. Having consulted with him my orders were to go to the front line, walk along the trenches, report back to him and then report further to French.

Accompanying the Indian Corps was my old friend, F. E. Smith, who had surrendered all his work at home in order to help in this enterprise.

For my own part I believe it would have been wiser to have

sent a corresponding number of Territorials from England. But Lord Kitchener, with all his great qualities, had certain fixed obsessions, one of which was that the Territorial Army could be of no use until after a long period of training. This view had already been disproved by the valiant services rendered by such units as the Oxfordshire Yeomanry, Lord Hampden's Battalion, the London Scottish and other Territorial units, to which Lord French paid eloquent testimony in his despatch of November 20th, 1914. But Lord Kitchener remained of his original opinion, and sent a large portion of the Territorial force to India, while bringing the Indian Corps to Europe. Whatever the merits of the question, the thing was done, and F. E. Smith found himself living in a cottage belonging to the local curé, some two miles behind the front line. Characteristically, he brought two of his best hunters with him, and stabled them in a half-ruined outhouse.

One day when I had been sent to the Indian front with direct instructions from Sir John French to examine the question of the use of periscopes, amongst other things, by the Indian troops, I found F. E., and told him of my mission. He offered to lend me a horse to ride up near to the front line, and insisted on accompanying me. It had always been my rule—and always will be—when going to the front line, to go as far as possible on horseback. It is a very good rule, which I recommend to everyone who may read this book. One covers the distance in a quarter of the time, and one is five times as difficult to hit. For those who doubt the value of this advice I would say that I always adopted this method, that I went up to the front line on the western front on over four hundred different days, and that except for a good many scratches I was never hit. On this occasion I have no doubt that if F. E. and I had walked instead of riding we should certainly have been hit, and probably killed. We trotted fast along a pavé road; when we got near to the battalion headquarters, for which we were bound, we came under considerable rifle fire. It was a misty evening,

making accurate aim impossible, but many hundreds of bullets flew past us. I shouted to F. E. to turn about and gallop back, telling him that it was none of his business; he paid no attention. When we were about two hundred yards from headquarters a ricochet bullet off the stony road struck F. E.'s horse in the fetlock and down they both came with a crash. F. E. was unhurt, and, shouting to the orderly to look after the horse, ran on. I jumped off, gave his other horse to the orderly, and followed him. It really was an advantage that F. E. came with me, for he knew just where the headquarters were and the name of the colonel.

I explained my mission to the commanding officer, and we proceeded to the front line. There was much rifle fire, and I must confess it was a very bad time to conduct the kind of conversation which I had been instructed to have. Most of the officers knew F. E., but one had recently joined; F. E. spoke to him; he said he had been called to the Bar. I remember very well F. E. telling him, with insistence, that if they both came through the war alive he could always count upon him as his friend.

It is impossible to exaggerate the acute misery of the Indians in the bitter cold and wet. In many places trenches could not be dug because they immediately filled with water; so parapets had to be made, which were easily destroyed by even the lightest artillery. All the more does it redound to the honour of the Indian troops that, sick with cold and dysentery and far from home, they never wavered or failed.

In the following year all the Indian infantry were sent to the Eastern theatre of war. The Indian cavalry remained, and it was my privilege to find myself, from time to time, in command of some of their gallant brigades. In the second, and disastrous battle of Cambrai, had it not been for the desperate valour of the Indian cavalry, the Canadian cavalry—which I commanded—might well have been destroyed.

Christmas time, 1914, was a grim business. At the extreme

north of the line the inundations barred the progress of the Germans on the Dixmüde-Pervyse-Nieuport front, so long as stout-hearted men could be found to man the breast-works and ruined village surrounded by water and mud.

Tom Bridges and Prince Alexander of Teck were on this front, attached to the remnants of the Belgian Army, commanded in person by the King of the Belgians. I was sent to this portion of the front on several occasions, specially to report on the complicated system of sluices at the entrance of the Yser.

It was the strangest part of the front I ever saw; the two long lines of trenches, now consolidated, started from Switzerland and ended up on the Belgian coast, just east of the entrance to the Yser Canal. On this frontier on the North Sea the trenches were so close together, that at one point they were less than thirty yards apart. I often walked to the north end of the line, just to see the sea and feel my feet on the wet sand, as at home; out at sea were our gunboats and monitors bombarding the German positions, and zig-zagging to avoid the enemy shells.

Then French always occupied this extreme northerly sector until near the end of the war. On one occasion I was told off to accompany a French attack, designed to advance the line a little further east of the Yser. Before the attack began the Germans opened fire with their Austrian thirteen-inch guns. The shells fell on the hard sand and burst, almost on impact, with exceptionally violent concussion. As I walked along the front line trench just before the attack began I learnt a lesson which I have not seen referred to in any book. I asked a French corporal to point out to me the commander of his platoon. He pointed to a sergeant sitting on a fire step with his elbow resting on his knee and his chin resting on his hand. One of those great shells had dropped just behind him a moment before. When I touched him I found he was stone dead, although there was no wound on him. There was a gallant French doctor in the front line, who came up and explained to me the obvious

thing that had happened. The concussion of the shell had travelled straight up the bone of his leg from the heel to the knee, thence from the elbow to the palm, and had delivered to the chin the knockout blow. The great rule when big shells are flying about it to stand on your toes, with your knees bent; then you come to no harm from concussion.

I think Tom Bridges and Prince Alexander of Teck were the coolest hands in a fight I have ever met; they were frankly bored with the whole business, but never seemed to mind.

The French cavalry general, General de Mitry, was in command of the extreme northern sector. He knew the French line from personal observation from A to Z, cheerfully taking all risks every day of his life. But the life and soul of the defence was de Mitry's chief-of-staff, a really wonderful man. All the troops adored him, and it was as delightful as it was strange to see him moving about amongst them, addressing many by their christian names. Tom Bridges had a tremendous admiration for him, prophesying that one day he would be one of France's foremost soldiers. Alas, he was killed before the prophecy could be fulfilled.

Just about Christmas Day Sir John French showed me a copy of a telegram from the Grand Duke Nicholas to Marshal Joffre, saying that he was hard pressed, and could Joffre arrange for an attack on the western front to relieve the pressure. Joffre had replied that there were no troops available for anything on a large scale; could Sir John French do anything? French considered that no useful purpose could be served by a small attack, but ultimately, on the urgent request of all concerned, directed an attack to be made at the point which seemed most likely to draw enemy reinforcements. The point selected was the eastern face of Ploegsteert Wood, and the attacking troops were General Hunter Weston's Brigade. I was given the orders to take up to Hunter Weston, and the attack was duly planned by him, after close personal reconnaissance from the front line.

My duty was to accompany the attack, observe, encourage and report.

Very heavy rain had fallen, and our trenches were half full of water. The attack was timed for dusk, and the signal was to be the bursting of the few heavy shells available—an elementary kind of barrage. We heard our shells humming over our heads, and as they burst we jumped over the parapet. We were about six yards apart, and with difficulty ploughed our way through the deep mud. When we got about half-way to the German front line, over a very slight incline, a bouquet of Verey lights went up, and very heavy machine-gun fire opened from a concealed German redoubt about fifty yards to my right. At that moment both my legs were stuck in the mud up to the knees. The machine-gun fire was deadly; a man about six to my right fell riddled with bullets, then the next, then the next, then the next, and the next—I could hear the bullets thudding into their bodies—then it was my turn. I was sure that my time had come at last, and waited the thud, thud, that had killed my comrades. But the bullets went humming by about two yards to my right: I could see the flash of the machine gun quite clearly. Then it dawned on me that the gun was in an embrasure, and the gunner could not traverse it far enough to reach me. I lay on my back for a moment and slowly wriggled my legs out of the mud. I looked to right and left, and saw that the attack had failed.

On my way back to our lines I found a cavalry officer, who had come up to observe, in a shell hole with a man shot through the thigh. He was tying him up with his handkerchief. Together we managed to drag him back to our front line, and, with infinite difficulty, to lift him to the top of the parapet, and over into the trench.

Our losses in officers and men were heavy. News came through that the purpose of the attack had been achieved to some extent. The Germans, thinking that the little bombardment and attack were the prelude to a more formidable on-

slaught, did in fact divert reinforcements to that sector of the front. Lille was only a few miles away, and its possession was important to the enemy. Any attack in that region, therefore, caused nervousness in the German lines. But granted all this, I wondered then, and I wonder now, what real purpose was served by sending the infantry over the top in that muddy area. The slow moving infantryman has a poor chance in any case against concealed machine-gun and rifle fire; his only chance is a short rush at the double. But if you slow him down to two miles an hour, by sending him over deep mud, his fate is sealed. The "sealed pattern" military mind seems incapable of descending to realities; it refuses to face new facts, and, with equal stubbornness, refuses to make simple mathematical calculations. A heavy bombardment; a swift rush in the darkness under cover of overwhelming rifle and machine gun fire; an attack in a smoke cloud, which the enemy is induced to believe is a gas cloud; a surprise attack by mounted men, with or without tanks, when the enemy has not had time to prepare serious wire entanglements; all these things may be reasonable operations of war. But to order an infantry attack in clear weather, in successive waves, against a civilised enemy with unbroken morale can never be right.

One thing is certain, the rule which Napoleon made for himself should be observed by every commander in every war, of whatever nature it may be. No attack against an enemy in position should ever be launched unless the officers responsible for planning it and giving the orders, from the lowest to the highest, have surveyed the ground from the front line. Not only from a hill a mile or two in rear; not only from an aeroplane, though both of these are good things to do, but from the actual front line. So only can the commander understand the real problem which the troops have to face; so only can he avoid drawing red lines, brown lines, and green lines to be successively occupied, while all the time those in the front line know that each of these lines is impossible of attainment, and

even if attained could not conceivably be held. There is no difficulty in getting to the front line in any war, and very little danger. The admiral of a fleet at sea takes precisely the same risks as the humblest sailor under his command; the General of an army must do the same.

After Christmas the fighting all along the northern front died down. I knew that my particular task was done, and longed for some command, however small.

Sir John French asked me to pay complimentary visits to the French Generals commanding on both sides of us. The Duke of Marlborough, who had taken on the laborious and thankless job of carrying despatches to the Front, suggested that we might seize the opportunity to take presents to the French Generals from Sir John French. The question of who should pay for these gifts, which were of considerable value, was never settled; in theory, the British Government was to pay, actually, I surmise, Marlborough paid himself. It was a good idea, and gave great pleasure to General de Maud'huy, General d'Urbal, and especially to General de Castelnau.

At Sir John French's request, I took the opportunity on these visits to go round the French trench systems, and write a report on them. The most interesting visit was to General de Castelnau, who arranged for me to go along a considerable portion of his front line, and in the evening to dine with him and stay the night. After six hours in the front line trenches I returned to his headquarters, which were in a French villa. He had tea ready for me, and, wonder of wonders, a hot bath. I was introduced to all his staff, and the method of French Staff work was explained to me. Then General de Castelnau took me into his private room. Covering the whole of one wall was a large map, including not only Europe, but Western Asia. We had a conversation of extraordinary interest. He asked me how Lord Kitchener was getting on with the raising of his new army. I had received permission from Sir John French and Lord Kitchener to talk to de Castelnau quite freely, so I gave him

the facts, telling him that the recruiting and equipment were going on exceedingly well; that Lord Kitchener calculated to have a fresh million of men under arms within eight months. General de Castelnau asked: "What is going to be done with them?" I replied: "I do not know. What would be your idea?" He took me to the map, and, standing in front of it, said: "I suppose as a Frenchman I ought to say, 'Send them all to France.' But speaking as one who has endeavoured to think out the strategy of the war, I say, 'No.' Here for a long time we have stalemate. Any attack made by either side will be so costly that it will not be worth while. On the other hand, for many a month to come, the Mediterranean will be an Anglo-French lake; it will be a long time before German and Austrian submarines become a serious menace. This is where your great new army should be employed—Salonica, Drama, Dedeagatch." I said: "That idea has always appealed to my less instructed mind. But are there harbours and roads?" He answered: "I have studied that country; for a few million pounds the harbours and roads can be made. The inevitable result of an attack of magnitude in that region will be the instant co-operation of the Greeks and the detachment, first, of Bulgaria, then Turkey, and finally Austria. Then Germany is doomed. But it is a race with time for two reasons. The first is, that the Germans are making tremendous efforts to get their submarines in numbers into the Mediterranean. The second, that internal troubles will detach Russia from the Allies before we are two years older." It was clear that he spoke with knowledge and profound conviction. I reported this interview to Lord French and through him to Lord Kitchener. I had no doubt then, and I have no doubt now, that he was right.

I dined with General de Castelnau after this conversation. It was the "jour de l'an." An old French custom is to put a little bambino in the pudding, and whoever finds it on his plate is the "roi du table" for that year. At any time until the following "jour de l'an" he may descend upon his friend and

demand the best that he can give. By accident, or design, I received the bambino. De Castelnau was delighted, and said that so long as I carried it no bullet or shell would hurt me too badly. I have carried it in my pocket from that day to this. He was a great soldier. I am sure that after Foch, who stood head and shoulders above the commanders of every nation, de Castelnau was the wisest of the French Generals.

CHAPTER XV

Recalled to the War Office—In Command of Canadian Brigade—Salisbury Plain and Colonel MacDonnell—France Again—Battle of Festubert—The Point K 5—General Sam Hughes—Comparison of Tactics—John Redmond—Recall of Sir John French—Winston's Disappointment.

So far, I had taken part in the war as a staff officer, but not in command of fighting troops. The active command, which I had so ardently hoped for, was to come.

A few days after I had presented to Sir John French my reports on my visits to the French Generals, I received orders to report at the War Office. Sir John French told me that he had recommended me to Lord Kitchener for a command. I was overjoyed at the fulfilment of my hopes, even though I was grieved to leave Sir John French's staff. Henry Wilson, Archibald Murray, Nevil Macready, Fido Childs, were all men with whom I had worked in close co-operation at the War Office before the war, and we had been through such desperate times together during the retreat from Mons that no ordinary friendship was formed. Moreover, there was the personal staff, Barry, Watt and Freddie Guest. But the work allotted to me on the outbreak of war was finished, and I longed, as everyone did, to take my place in the line. There was another advantage in being thus peremptorily ordered to England, for incidentally it compelled me to break the vow I had made to the King, that I would not return until the war was over.

On my arrival at the War Office Lord Kitchener greeted me with much cordiality. We talked for some time about the progress of the war on the Western Front; he then told me that he had arranged to form a mounted brigade out of all the

Canadian units which did not form part of the first Canadian Infantry Division, and that he had appointed me to command it. The Brigade was to consist of the two permanent, or regular, regiments of cavalry—the Royal Canadian Dragoons and Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians)—together with two permanent, or regular, batteries of Royal Canadian Horse Artillery. To these was to be added a third regiment of cavalry, and all the necessary additions of engineers, supply, signal and transport units required to form an independent mounted brigade, totalling about three thousand men of all arms. He asked my views as to the third regiment. I said I did not know what there was available. He told me he had taken a personal interest in the Second King Edward's Horse, which was composed of men from all parts of the Empire. It had been raised by Colonel Montague Craddock, Major Arthur Murray and his brother Gideon Murray, James Leigh Wood and others. He said they were a remarkable body of men, and I gladly accepted his suggestion. "Now," he said, "you must go and find your command." I little thought how difficult it would be to get to them. I went to Salisbury, and started off in a motor-car to a place called the Bustard. It could not be reached by car, as the mud was too deep; however, I borrowed a horse and managed to ride there, then I was given the general direction of the Royal Canadian Dragoons and set to work to ride to them. After a time the horse could go no further, being up to his knees and hocks in mud, so I dismounted and walked the rest of the way. Even in Flanders I had not seen such a sea of mud. I found the Royal Canadian Dragoons and Lord Strathcona's Horse quite undismayed by the miserable conditions in which they were living. The Dragoons were commanded by Colonel Nelles; the Strathcona's by Colonel (now Sir) Archibald Macdonell, lately commanding the Royal Military College at Kingston, Canada.

Macdonell was, and is, one of the most remarkable men alive. He had been the life and soul of the North-



CANADIAN CAVALRY BRIGADE IN FRANCE
From the painting by A. J. Mannings, R.A.

West Mounted Police, had kept order in the first Klondyke Gold Rush; had gone through every adventure in that most adventurous corps, had been wounded in South Africa, and had finally organised Strathcona's Horse, Royal Canadians, as a regiment to serve in the Great War. He had various mottoes for his command, all of which we adopted for the whole brigade. To grouse was a crime; nobody groused. Shell-shock was a delusion: all through the war nobody had shell-shock. To surrender unwounded was disgraceful: nobody surrendered unwounded. Altogether he was the embodiment of a fine military tradition, owing little to precedent, everything to character.

After some difficulty I managed to locate the two batteries of the Canadian Horse Artillery, commanded by Colonel Panet (now General Panet, Adjutant-General of the Department of National Defence). They, also, refused to be downcast by the mud and slush in which they were living. The first thing to do was to get them out of the mud, and after a good deal of telegraphing, I obtained the necessary permission to move them into billets on the north of the Plain.

The King came down to review the 1st Canadian Division before it left the Plain, and we took part in the parade. It was splendid to see our Sovereign on his horse, receiving the salute. All through the war the King's visits to the troops had a wonderful effect for good.

So the first Canadian Division sailed for France, much to the concern of my little command, who hated being left behind. They were terrified that the war would be over before they could get there, but I managed to reassure them on this point.

Later my whole command was concentrated at Maresfield Park, the erstwhile home of Count Munster. Then came a period of intensive training and preparation, during which I learnt to love the remarkable men whom I had been set to lead. More loyal and devoted soldiers no man ever commanded. I knew that they would render good service, but I could not fore-

see the wonderful distinction they would earn, least of all that in the end, as the sequel of this book will prove, at the most terrible moment of the war this tiny force would play a leading and even a decisive part.

My staff was composed as follows: the Brigade Major was Captain Jury, later on the Staff of General Headquarters in France. I appointed Captain Docherty, of Lord Strathcona's Horse, which he afterwards commanded with distinction, to be Staff Captain, and Captain Sir Archibald Sinclair, of the 2nd Life Guards, as my aide-de-camp. Sinclair had served with his regiment in France from the first day. He was much beloved by the Canadians, and was known by men of every rank from colonel to private as "Archie." He is now the Lord-Lieutenant of Caithness, and the Member for that county, both of which duties, by common consent, he fulfils very well. But I beg leave to doubt whether he has ever rendered such useful service as he did when he served with the Canadian Cavalry Brigade. I also appointed Colonel Macdonell's son, Ian—a lieutenant in Lord Strathcona's Horse—as my assistant aide-de-camp. He was a lad of singular charm and dauntless courage. After he had been with me in France for some time he insisted on joining the Royal Flying Corps. He turned out a brilliant flyer, but, alas, was killed in an air fight some months later.

Early in April I received an urgent telegram to go and see Lord Kitchener at once at the War Office. I had known him intimately for fifteen years, and had seen him in many moods, but never before had I seen him really angry. He marched up and down the Secretary of State's room at the War Office, denouncing the German Higher Command in most violent language, for their wickedness in employing the barbarous method of gas attack, in flagrant defiance of their promise at the Hague. He told me all about the first gas attack at Ypres: the terrible losses sustained by the French and the heavy losses of the first Canadian Division. He asked me to return to

Maresfield and inquire from my men if they would volunteer to leave their horses behind and go out to France as infantry. I replied that it was quite unnecessary to ask them, as, of course, they would be ready to do anything in the world in such an emergency. But no argument I could use would move him. He said: "No, I will have volunteers on this occasion." I returned to my Brigade, met the commanding officers, told them what Lord Kitchener had said, and asked them to parade their men and call for volunteers. They, too, said it was quite unnecessary. However, it was done and, of course, every man volunteered. I so informed Lord Kitchener by telegram, and within forty-eight hours we were on our way to France.

We joined the first Canadian Division, under the command of General Alderson, and very soon found ourselves moving into the Battle of Festubert. We were in reserve for the first two days, then we took over the front line. Losses had been very severe on both sides. Round about a place which we called K.5 more corpses, British and German, were strewn about and piled one on another than anywhere I had seen, even at the Battle of the Marne.

We were to attack the next morning. I was anxious for my men, for we had far to go, and I did not see how we could get to our objective with many men left alive. It was a misty night as I walked along the front line trenches, just before midnight, with Major Arthur Murray, of King Edward's Horse, my two aides-de-camp and an orderly. We clambered over the parapet and went forward to look at the ground we should have to traverse next morning. Murray had reconnoitred it before himself. I particularly wanted to see whether there was water in a broad ditch about half-way between our own front line and the Germans. I found that there was, but we could jump it. There were a few shells humming far overhead, but a strange absence of rifle fire. All at once, quite close to me, in the mist, appeared three forms, not five yards away, moving towards us. With one accord we all jumped on them and brought them to

the ground, of course assuming them to be a German patrol. The man I held, as he lay on the ground, said in a broad Lancashire accent: "Don't throttle me, guv'nor." I whispered "Who are you?" He replied: "I am a stretcher-bearer." And so they were—three stretcher-bearers who had lost their way and wandered over into the German lines. At that moment the mist blew away slightly, and we saw the German parapet about forty yards away. I said: "Where have you come from?" To which they replied: "We walked all along there and could not find a soul." Instantly it dawned upon me that the Germans had got wind of the bombardment of the next day, and had evacuated their front line. I sent Murray back at a run to tell Colonel Craddock to come along at once, and, in little more time than it takes to tell, the trench was occupied by us. Then came the business of warning the people on both flanks, and getting them joined up. This was soon done: at the same time messengers were sent off to inform our artillery. And, behold, thanks to Murray and the three stretcher-bearers, we had occupied the whole of our objective six hours before the proper time without the loss of a single man.

There followed four days of confused and desperate fighting in an attempt to capture the point K.5 and the enemy trenches to the right of it. The whole ground was so churned up with shells, and covered with corpses, that it was difficult to be quite sure where this point really was. The battalion of Territorial Infantry on my right recorded its capture, only to be told that the point was fifty yards further on. One of my regiments managed to advance the extra distance; they then put up a large placard, facing the British lines, on which was inscribed: "*This is K.5.*"

Towards the close of the fierce fighting at Festubert and Givenchy we were ordered to support an attack timed to take place at the moment of explosion of a mine. I stood on the fire-step and watched the leading battalion go over at the instant when the mine went off with a loud roar.

The mine did not explode in the right place; as a consequence the enemy machine-guns had not been silenced, and practically every officer and man of this gallant battalion was killed or wounded. I actually had one foot on the parapet ready to jump over when an officer came pushing his way along the crowded trench and handed me a message. I read: "Attack postponed." It was a wonderful escape for us all. For, in my long experience on the Western Front, I observed that if the first attack failed, the second wave was even more completely destroyed.

We were relieved by a Guards battalion, commanded by the one-armed Colonel Trotter. I never saw a man so cheerful under such distressing circumstances. He and his men were all smiles and good humour as I met them at the foot of the communication trench.

One curious coincidence at the battle of Festubert was that General Gough and I came into close relations once more. The last time had been the Ulster crisis; this was a crisis of a very different kind. In order to make the identification of units more difficult by the enemy, bodies of troops were sometimes called by the names of their commanders. So, in the list of units at Festubert there was Gough's Force and Seely's Force. Gough's force formed a large part of the army present; mine was but a small fraction. At the close of the battle Mr. Asquith came to see the troops returned from the front line. He was interested and moved by the linking up of our two names. While my men marched past him, he talked to me, and said, amongst other things: "War is a great healer as well as a great destroyer. I like to see Gough and you such close friends." He went on from me to Gough's headquarters, where he had tea, and told him the same thing.

Festubert was the first battle in which my men had taken part. The numbers engaged, though large, were much smaller than at the Somme or Paschendaele. But the fighting was peculiarly desperate, much of it, literally, hand-to-hand. It is the only place where I have seen a complete parapet, elabor-

ately built up for a hundred yards or more, composed entirely of dead bodies, nearly all Germans. Those who were there will remember this strange parapet, stretching in front of the point K 5.

General Alderson was in command of the division, with added units. Currie commanded the Canadians on the ground the first few days, then he was bowled over by a big shell, and I succeeded to the command for a brief period.

All my three units did extraordinarily well, and officers and men received many immediate rewards for acts of gallantry.

But the fortunate thing was that although we had, of course, severe casualties, we were never mown down. It takes a regiment, battalion, brigade or division a long time to recover from that experience.

Then followed long months of trench warfare. My force occupied a dangerous salient between Ploegsteert and Kemel. I will not weary my readers with a long account of these experiences, but some things are worth recording. We occupied this sector without relief for forty-nine days, during which time, as most brigadiers did, I spent a considerable part of every day and night in the front line, and occasionally beyond. The Germans made no infantry attacks during this period, although such an attack was constantly predicted. It seemed a fairly obvious operation for them to endeavour to bite off the salient. In spite of the fact that they made no infantry attack the shell and rifle fire was often severe; in the first few days we suffered serious casualties. I conceived the idea of constructing dummy trenches and strong points on a large scale. I put one of my very best officers, Captain Docherty, in charge of the operation, and gave him permanently two officers and a hundred men to carry out the work. He was daring, resourceful and most ingenious in the things he did, after I had given him the general idea. We carefully studied the air photographs of our sector, and had long consultations with the officer commanding the air squadron which took the photographs. We also spent much

time at our own artillery observation posts, finding out from the artillery officers what they would think it worth while to fire at. Thus we found a way of making quite shallow trenches indistinguishable from the real ones. In one night Docherty constructed a complete new dummy trench system. We adopted every artifice we could think of to make the Germans believe we were occupying this new system instead of our own. Imagine my delight when the next morning I stood in the front line and saw the whole of the enemy shells dropping on the dummy trenches, dug-outs and strong points. Of course we could not deceive the Germans all the time, although we kept on deceiving them at intervals. But the real point is this: artillery nearly always have a limited ration of shells which they can fire; the great thing is to get them to distribute their fire over as many points as possible, instead of concentrating all the shells on the particular trenches which you hold. We had the usual system by which the number of enemy shells falling in the sector was recorded. From the day after Docherty began his work, although the average number of shells continued about the same, our casualties were reduced to less than a quarter of what they had been before.

We adopted many other methods to reduce casualties. For instance, bringing men in over the top screened from view at quite unexpected times, instead of sending them up the communication trenches at the usual hour. Where this was impossible we dug very deep communication trenches, with many zig-zags, covering them over with brushwood, and digging dummy communication trenches some yards to the right and left. It was really good fun to see the enemy shells falling with great accuracy on the dummy trenches, while our men marched up the concealed one in complete security. Of course, many others adopted similar expedients, but I think, perhaps, the Canadians can claim that we did these things on a bigger scale, and kept on adopting original methods. Another Canadian commander who was very keen about casualty-saving devices,

was General—now Sir Arthur—Currie. He had an almost fanatical hatred of unnecessary casualties. Of all the men that I knew in nearly four years on the western front, I think Currie was the man who took the most care of the lives of his troops. Moreover, again and again he nearly brought his career to an end by bluntly refusing to do things which he was certain would result in great loss of life without compensating advantage. He and I had a regular competition in these life-saving devices; so that after a time the whole of this country was seamed with “Currie Road,” “Seely Avenue,” and the like. That Currie survived all the narrow escapes he had, not only from enemy shells and rifle fire—and he was a big target—but even more dangerous onslaughts from his official superiors, and that finally he commanded the Canadian Corps at the hour of victory, is a source of pride and happiness to every Canadian.

During this period I had one or two interesting visitors. One was Josiah Wedgwood, who had been desperately, almost mortally, wounded on the Gallipoli Peninsula. As soon as he had sufficiently recovered he obtained permission to go out to the western front in order to learn our methods of warfare, with a view to being appointed to some fighting unit in France. It was a quiet day as I took him up to the front line. As bad luck would have it, just as we arrived in the front line trenches the Germans opened up considerable fire with Seventy-sevens and four-inch howitzers. Our parapet was very weak, and each shell that hit it breached a large hole. One such breach came just as Wedgwood was moving along, and he was hurled to the ground. I picked him up and put him on the fire step. There was no blood about him, but he was that kind of pallor, yellow, almost greenish, which you see in a badly battered man. Of course he was really unfit for anything except to sit quietly in a garden. He kept on protesting that he was all right, but it was some time before he was able to stand up. No doubt he very nearly died at that moment. I rejoice to think he is still alive and well. Another visitor was the Duke of Westminster,

who turned up with an armoured car, announcing that he was going to blow down a strong point which the artillery found it difficult to get at by direct fire. This remarkable man always turned up when I was in any kind of difficulty. On this occasion he got his pompom into position in most ingenious fashion, and managed to get a direct hit on to the point before his car was spotted and plastered with shrapnel. Bendor escaped, as he always did, and we got the battered car out that night, under cover of the darkness.

At last the forty-nine days came to an end—the longest spell I ever had. But we were only withdrawn about four miles in rear, and had to take over another sector a week or two later.

During the interval that eccentric genius, General Sam Hughes, the Canadian Minister of War, came out to see the Canadian troops. We paraded in a hollow square, and he proceeded to address the men. He was an eloquent man with a very loud voice. I was warned by one of my colonels that it was probable that he would speak for an hour. This was a gloomy prospect, for addresses to soldiers should, I think, never take more than two minutes. Just as he was about to begin a German aeroplane flew over. He had hardly uttered two sentences when the whine of a shell was heard, and in a moment there was a tremendous crash, which put an end to the speech and the parade. I often wonder what the Germans must have thought we were up to.

Odd as it may seem, it is a fact that we were all very happy during these times. We grieved at the loss of our comrades, but we all knew that it was no good going on grieving.

Here may I be allowed to say a word to those who talk about the horrors of war, with a view to securing perpetual peace. It never does any good to say things which are not true. These misguided advocates of peace use a phrase which is grossly false, though doubtless, they do not realise it. They say that war is sordid and brutalising to the men who fight. It is no such thing. The greatest heights of unselfishness and devotion

are brought out in war. "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend." To rush forward to counter or receive the bayonet thrust directed at your comrade, to throw yourself on his prostrate body as the bomb explodes, above all, fearlessly to lead the last desperate attack, so that thus you may give heart and courage to your followers in that supreme moment—these things, which I have seen again and again with my own eyes, are the very pith of our Christian faith. Let no man who values his soul depreciate them. War is as ennobling to the combatants as it is demoralising to the onlookers.

While we were out of the line I received this letter from Winston Churchill:—

20.9.15.

Duchy of Lancaster Office,
Lancaster Place,
Strand, W.C.

My dear Jack,

Archie will have told you all my news up till he left. Since then I have become swiftly and deeply involved in a serious political situation from which I cannot detach myself, and the upshot of which cannot yet be seen. Till then I have no plans.

It is odious to me to remain here watching sloth and folly with full knowledge and no occupation.

I was deeply touched by the very great kindness of your letter. I hope you will not go beyond the line of duty sportingly conceived in going into danger. Do not seek peril beyond what is necessary to discharge your full task, and do not get Archie into trouble.

God bless you and guard you both is the hope and prayer of your faithful friend,

W.

After a fortnight's rest in immediate reserve, four regiments of Canadian Mounted Rifles came to France and were added

to my command. They were splendid men and soon tumbled to the peculiarities of trench warfare. We first took over the defence of Kemel, and later of a difficult part of the line in front of Dickebusch, at the south of the Ypres salient. The autumn rains had come, and many of the communication trenches were full of water. We managed to drain them and reconstruct a good deal of the trench system, but it was a miserable place to hold. I thought then, and I think now, that the whole proceedings on the Western Front in this matter of closely contiguous trenches were extremely foolish. What purpose was served by bringing both lines of infantry as close together as possible, and then proceeding with the destruction of each other by shell, rifle, bomb and mine, I could not and cannot understand. We were told that it was Siege Warfare, and everything must be conducted as in the siege of a fortified place. Indeed, the whole procedure of both sides was modelled on famous sieges of days gone by; but the circumstances were wholly different. In a siege you surround the fortress or town to be attacked and naturally get as close as you can, or to use the military phrase, closely invest the place, in order to decrease the size of the circle and thus economise men. There is a second reason for this close contact in the case of a siege: the object is to deprive the enemy of all opportunities of bringing up any supplies of food, water and ammunition. The more you restrict his movements the more difficult it is for him to make a successful sally. In this case, far from economising men by getting closer, the exact contrary was the result, for the line to be occupied was the same length, whether the lines were close together or far apart, and the loss of life due to the close proximity was, of course, much greater. Some foolish people on the Allied side thought that the war would be ended on the Western Front by killing off the Germans. Of course this method could only succeed if we killed a great many more of them than we lost ourselves. By the methods we adopted at Loos, Festubert, the Somme and Paschendaele, we achieved the

very reverse. The same school of thought said that it was necessary to get close to the enemy in order to cultivate our offensive spirit. In all my comments I am expressing the front line point of view, where I spent so much of my time for nearly four years. I could see from that point of view that the offensive spirit, instead of being increased was progressively diminished by fruitless attacks. I remember Botha saying to me: "With troops, I am sure, the first courage is the best courage. Every man has a certain amount of courage implanted in him. Every time he is heavily engaged, especially if not successful, a large slice is taken off that courage, like taking a slice off the cheese, until at last there is none left." I said: "Perhaps it may grow again." He replied: "Yes, but very slowly, and it never grows so big again. The first courage is the best courage." I have no doubt Botha was right. In fairness it must be said that the British commanders were not entirely free agents. The French had committed themselves to the theory that not one inch of the sacred soil of France should be surrendered when once it had been recaptured. Napoleon regarded Europe, including France, as his chessboard, on which he moved his armies as he willed. That he would have sat down with a vast host within close range of the enemy, when experience told him that he could not dislodge them I could never believe. Still, that was the French theory as propounded by their statesmen in constant speeches. Had we failed to conform to their policy the results would have been serious in the extreme. There was a further excuse for this mistaken policy so far as the British commanders were concerned. The French Army had suffered terrible losses in the opening phases of the war, and again in the attacks in Artois and elsewhere. Our losses, though as great or greater in proportion to the numbers on the battlefield were, of course, in total much smaller.

Early in 1915 the French thought that Britain was not bearing her proper portion of the defence. Whenever we made an attack, whether successful or not, the relations between ourselves

and the French improved beyond measure. I had a striking proof of this at the time of which I write, the autumn of 1915. When we came out of the line I got permission from Sir John French to take a "busman's holiday," by visiting that portion of their front line which lay nearest to us. I made a report to Sir John French on certain ingenious aspects of their trench systems and methods of trench warfare, and was compelled to add that they spoke in the warmest terms of the great help we had given them by our attack at Loos. History has judged Loos a failure, but, on the other hand, it had the effect I describe.

But the tragic mistake that was made all through the war on the Western Front was throwing men's lives away by sending them over the top in an endeavour to harass the enemy, pin him down to our front and thus relieve the French front. These were all laudable objects, but all of us in the front line knew very well that they could have been achieved with equal or greater effect without the loss of life entailed. I must again insist upon the vital necessity in modern war for the man who orders any attack, right up to the Commander-in-Chief, surveying the ground from the front line. Certain elementary truths would then be borne in upon him which he does not otherwise apprehend. One of these truths is that the enemy is far more harassed and far more effectively pinned down by the anticipation of an attack than by the attack which is actually delivered, unless that attack is an overwhelming and complete success. The Latin saying: "*Omne ignotum pro magnifico*," is particularly true of modern warfare. Intense bombardment by guns of all calibres, machine-gun barrages; prolonged air reconnaissance; low flying aeroplanes shooting along the trenches, dummy preparations of all kinds, including dumps and railway sidings; actual orders to large bodies of troops to hold themselves in readiness, which enemy spies convey to their superiors; all these things and many more, can produce an amount of alarm among the enemy, and actual casualties in his ranks with the minimum

of loss to those threatening the attack. If to these methods be added night raids on a large scale, constant smoke clouds, and, where the ground is favourable, mass tank attacks, surprising results can be obtained without that fatal attempt to advance the line, which almost always involves casualties to the attackers far in excess of those inflicted on the defenders. We never could see the purpose of advancing by slow degrees. The most we could hope to do, the most that was ever intended by infantry attack, was the gaining of two or three miles of ground. We all used to say to each other: "It is four hundred miles to Berlin; at this rate of progress the war can't be over for a hundred years." But the voice of the front line was only faintly heard at general headquarters. Daily personal contact alone can cure these melancholy errors.

Late in the autumn of 1915 the King paid one of his periodical visits to the Front. He inspected the greater part of the Canadian Division at a place not far from Kemel, on the day before his serious accident. We were drawn up in a hollow square in a large grass field. We were, in fact, in view of the German lines, and were within range of their heavier long guns. But it was misty, and fortunately the enemy did not open fire. The King rode round the lines, said a kind word to many officers and men, and then addressed a few sentences to us. As we dispersed I heard one man say to another: "He is worth everything to this show, good job the Germans did not open fire." The other man said: "That's right. He is the only bloke who can speak to the troops." This was perfectly true, as I think all soldiers on the Western Front will testify.

During all this time I had seen much of George Nicholson, who, having been my principal private secretary from 1907 until the outbreak of war, had joined the Royal Flying Corps, in the founding of which he had played a great part, and had become a first-class flyer. He flew constantly over the German lines, and had a series of miraculous escapes. At intervals he would flop down somewhere near by and come to see us. He

was greatly beloved in the Flying Corps.

We had many other visitors during the brief periods when we were out of the line. The most interesting to me was John Redmond. He came to see me one winter's night at my headquarters, about half a mile behind our front line trench. His brother, Willie, was serving in the trenches not far away: Redmond had much to tell me about his aspirations and his difficulties on the day when war was declared. He had announced in the House of Commons at a dramatic moment his whole hearted support, and, he believed, the support of all his countrymen in this great conflict for liberty. But he had had a series of rebuffs and disillusiones, not so much from his own countrymen as from the authorities at home. He said he wished I could come home, see Kitchener and plead with him to give freer scope to Ireland's national sentiment. He said there were half a dozen simple ways in which one could please the Irish race, with no real drawback to military efficiency, thus bringing practically the whole nation under arms by voluntary enlistment. Nor would he shrink from conscription, if that were necessary. I told him that it was impossible for me to leave my Canadians, to which he regretfully agreed. I have not the least doubt, from what he then told me, and what I have since learnt, that Redmond was right. The sinister fate that had pursued all our relations with Ireland hung over us still. But I have a firm hope that these clouds of distrust are rolling away, and that as years go on Ireland and England are at last to be friends.

Another visitor was Winston Churchill. He had written to me shortly before the following letter:

17 Nov., 1915.

19, Abingdon Street,
Westminster, S.W.

My dear Jack,

I cross to-morrow to join my regiment near St. Omer. I

have no plans except to remain with them. It will give me real pleasure if you and Archie could come to see me there, and 'though it is hardly for a general to visit a major, I dare say you may be able to contrive an occasion.

I am extremely pleased with the way my own affairs have gone; but miserable about the situation in the near East. However, it is a relief to let all that slide off one's mind, and I shall be so glad to be back again with the army.

Write and let me know.

Yours ever,

W.

He had been appointed to a battalion of a famous Scottish regiment. He was alongside of us in the trenches on more than one occasion, and we used to exchange visits. When we were out of the line we dined together with Currie and other Canadian generals, including Lipsett, who, though not a Canadian, was a brilliant commander of one of the Canadian brigades. At one of these dinners there were present two remarkable men. One was that eccentric saint, Canon Scott, of Quebec. He lived with me for a long time; neither wounds nor fatigue could keep him out of the trenches. The men loved him, as well they might, for in hours of misery, help and comfort radiated from this undaunted soul. But his few eccentricities were a little embarrassing. One day some action of an unfortunate artillery officer in an adjacent division convinced the canon that the man was a German spy. He pursued him with infinite patience and cunning. About the same time that the canon discovered his mistake a message was received from the Army commander, Sir Douglas Haig, "This eccentric cleric must be removed." I managed to plead successfully for the reversal of this order, so that this great man continued his ministrations right up to the end of the war.

The other guest was also eccentric, and a genius too. He held the rank of corporal, but was universally known as "Fog-

horn Macdonald." He was a mining expert of distinction in Canada, and having enlisted at the beginning of the war, was appointed to superintend the mining operations on my front. He had a great command of language, which Canon Scott, but no one else, certainly no general, could moderate. Sir Arthur Currie will remember a tense interview with him, when he had taken over the command of the Canadian division, of which I then formed part. The meeting took place at the same ruined farm where John Redmond had found me. Currie was much worried at the weakness of our trenches and the probability of a German attack from the Messines Ridge, which dominated our position. We discussed the various ways of meeting the difficulties with some asperity, for each man always thinks he knows his own bit of the front best. Foghorn MacDonald sat on a table in the corner of the room, swinging his legs and listening to the conversation. To make things worse we were constantly interrupted by the bursting of shells in the near neighbourhood. Moreover, there was a rumble of fire from the front line, half a mile away, and I wanted to go and see what was happening. Presently Currie said: "There is another thing. I am very dissatisfied with the place in which you put your mine, Seely. I don't believe it has been started in the right spot, and I am sure you won't get the water out; you will drown your own men without doing any harm to the enemy." At this Corporal Foghorn MacDonald, who had hitherto taken no part in the conversation, said these astonishing words: "Look here, old man Currie, you don't know the first thing about mines. I have forgotten more about them than you will ever know. You may say what you like about the rest, but don't you try coming it over me about the mine, just because you are the stud duck in this puddle." To Currie's eternal honour, instead of placing my eccentric friend under arrest, he burst out laughing and said: "Well, that has broken the spell, anyway." Everything was then settled amicably in five minutes, and I got away to the front line.

It will be seen that the Canadian Army was very flexible. It found room for everybody, and managed with great success to put people to their own jobs. But let nobody think that these eccentricities relaxed real discipline. I can truly say that during the three and a half years I commanded the Canadians on the Western Front I never had a rebellious word or look, not once was an order disobeyed.

I have said that Churchill attended this Canadian dinner close behind the lines. He was a great success as a battalion commander. He understood the first thing about it, he spent a great part of his time in the front line. When he left the Government and volunteered for service in France, Sir John French sent him for a period of training with a Guards battalion commanded by Colonel Jeffreys—who afterwards commanded the Home district and now commands the Wessex Division. At the start Jeffreys did not approve of the arrangement and said so. But in a very few weeks he reported that Churchill had gained an exceptional knowledge of trench warfare in all its forms, and was fully competent to command a battalion. The event proved that he was right, for the officers and men loved Churchill, and would have followed him anywhere. In the normal course Sir John French asked him if he would take command of a brigade. Winston told me this with great glee, naming the brigade. He was heart and soul in the business, spending all the spare time he could find in thinking out new methods of attack and defence for this novel kind of warfare, and writing memoranda on the subject. Then a strange thing happened. Sir John French was recalled to England to take command of the Home Forces, Sir Douglas Haig being appointed in his stead. Like the true soldier that he was, French never allowed a word of protest to escape him, though he felt bitterly his removal from command of the forces in the field, which he had held during a year of incredible difficulties. His inner feelings may be judged by the answer that he made to a letter of sympathy from me:—

*Headquarters,
British Army,
Nov. 21, 1915.*

My dear Seely,

It gave me keen pleasure to receive your most kind letter, for which I heartily thank you.

I have to expect abuse from many quarters, but if it has the result of drawing such a letter as this from a man like you I welcome it.

*Yours very sincerely,
John French.*

The change affected the personal fortunes of Winston in a peculiar degree: for although the offer of a brigade had been made to him by French and duly accepted, the new Commander-in-Chief, for some reason which I have never been able to fathom, informed Churchill that his services would be required at home, and that the offer of a brigade was withdrawn. I saw Churchill just after he had received this intimation. In forty years of close friendship I have never seen him so deeply disappointed and hurt. Indeed, he had every reason. He had served through every rank in the army, from a second-lieutenant to lieutenant-colonel commanding a battalion in the field. He had been through Sandhurst, and, either as an observer or a combatant officer, had served in five campaigns with distinction, mentions in despatches, medals, and clasps. All had been earned by him in fierce engagements in India, Egypt and South Africa. He had come up to the exacting standard of the Guards brigade for appointment to his battalion, and had done so well in that capacity that the Commander-in-Chief had offered him promotion. It was an extraordinary instance of the rigid exclusiveness of the old-fashioned military mind. The fact that he could write well should have taught them that he could think well. The fact that he could rise in parliament from a private member

to be first Secretary of State and then First Lord of the Admiralty should have taught them that here was a man with a strong constitution and a powerful, alert and clear brain. I said at the time that if Napoleon had had the opportunity he would, without doubt have promoted him to command an army straight off on the chance that the qualities that had made for his meteoric rise in peace might be of equal value in war. Of course Napoleon would have ruthlessly shorn him had he failed. But it is certain he would have given him the opportunity. As it was, sore at heart, but making the best of it, Winston returned to England.

CHAPTER XVI

*"Shell" Craddock and Major Hasketh—A Drive to Agincourt—
Battle of the Somme—General Haldane's Attack—Demolition of
Peronne—Lieutenant Harvey V.C.*

THE winter of 1915-16 was terrible for the troops in the front line. The Higher Command still dreamt of an early victorious advance, so we remained close up against the enemy trenches, in absurd positions, only occupied because we happened to have got there when the Germans retired before us on October, 1914. There were right-angle salients of no military value whatever, occupied by successive brigades at great loss. There were marshy places where the trenches were always half full of water. There was at least one sector, which my men occupied, where a little river ran through, rising in the winter to such volume that large portions of the front line had to be unoccupied, while it was with difficulty and danger that one crossed the stream from one side to the other. Looking back on it all one can see the fantastic folly of the proceeding. In a dozen different places along the British front line there was nothing to prevent us from making a good dry system of trenches one, two, three or four miles further back, thus inviting the Germans to come and sit in the morasses of the salients if they chose to do so. Of course, there were positions where this could not be done. It was vital to hold Ypres, and there the operation I have described would have been difficult on a large scale, but even so much might have been done. The whole trouble was caused by a false conception of the meaning and purpose of this or any other war. The dreary phrase, "I will not abandon an inch of ground which I have once gained," was responsible for an appalling sum of human misery. The wonderful thing to record is that, although the front line people realised the truth of what I have just

written perfectly well, they never lost heart. They grumbled, of course, but always good humouredly, ever hoping that wiser counsels would prevail; that either we should go forward to better ground, which is what they expected, or go back to better ground—an alternative far preferable to remaining stuck in the mud. Here again one saw that strange mysterious thing, the working of the old-fashioned military mind. Whether in appointments or in dispositions, a wooden inefficiency seemed to cling around every decision.

Fortunately for us the Germans made precisely similar mistakes, though in a less degree, for the first two years of the war, then they constructed the Hindenburg line and occupied ground of their own choosing.

It is a curious thing that the combination of a large number of military minds produces a body of doctrine far inferior in wisdom and truth to that which is produced by the mind of any one of them. The same phenomenon in so far as tolerance is concerned is observed in the case of the clerical profession, as most people who have attended diocesan conferences or church assemblies will agree. I suppose this is the reason for Napoleon insisting on war being the affair of one man and one mind. I conceive that to be the true meaning of his oft quoted saying: "In war men are nothing, a man is everything."

Christmas passed, unbelievably wet and cold. It was the second Christmas Day that I had spent in the front line. It was to be my good fortune to spend two more. The first was at the south end of the Ypres Salient: the second under the Messines Ridge, on the banks of the little River Douve; the third on the Somme battlefield, in front of Morval; the fourth opposite St. Quentin, on the banks of the River Omignon. It was much the best place to spend Christmas during the war.

Soon after the new year I received orders that my brigade was to be reconstituted as a mounted brigade. The 2nd King Edward's Horse were to go off as divisional cavalry, their place to be taken by one of the Canadian militia cavalry regiments,

then in training in England. As soon as we were withdrawn from the line these changes were to be effected, and I was to come to England to choose the third unit, while my command was to start refitting as a mounted brigade west of Abbeville.

At the same time I got two letters. One was from my eldest son, Frank, whom I believed to be at Harrow, where he was in the Sixth Form and nearing the head of the school. His letter ran:—

Dear Daddy,

I hope you will not mind, but I thought I should not remain at home while other people were being shot, so I arranged to go to Sandhurst and have passed all the examinations. I think it will be all right about my age.

Perhaps I might join you as a Canadian.

Your loving son,

Frank.

I wonder how many tens of thousands of fathers got similar letters from these brave, unselfish lads. I wrote to my faithful friend Sir Herbert Creedy, at the War Office, who had been for so long my private secretary, and asked him to arrange with Kitchener that Frank should join me as aide-de-camp, although he was under the required age. I added that it seemed to me quite certain that if they did not do this he would wangle himself out to the front in some other way. This was accordingly done, to my infinite happiness, and not to the detriment of the brigade, for every Canadian loved the boy.

The other letter I received was from Prince Antoine d'Orléans, whom I had not seen for some weeks. Antoine and his brother, Louis d'Orléans, had joined our army at Le Cateau in August, 1914. They were sons of the Comte d'Eu, a great friend and a kinsman of Queen Victoria. Being of the French Royal House, they were forbidden by law from serving in the French Army. They had, accordingly, done their

military training with the Austrian Army, under a personal promise from the Emperor Francis Joseph to the Comte d'Eu that if ever France were involved in war he would give the boys a safe conduct, so that they might fight for their country. The emperor had fulfilled his promise, but President Poincaré had told them at an interview, where they offered to serve as private soldiers, that the law was adamant, and that they could not serve in the armies of France. He commended them to our King, who sent them to Kitchener. Leave was given to them to wear our uniform, but without commissions. They gave good service from the start of the war on the staff of the 1st and 2nd Armies. Louis contracted fever in the Ypres Salient, from which he died later. Antoine was fit and well. He said that he had been sent on a special mission to lines of communication. They told him the fact of his being a Frenchman would enable him to fulfil the position better than any Englishman could do it. But he said he had not joined up for that sort of service, and he must get into the front line. It was then that I managed to get him promoted Captain in the Royal Canadian Dragoons. I appointed him as assistant aide-de-camp and intelligence officer. He was especially qualified for the latter position by his knowledge of almost every European language, his precise mind, and, above all, his complete fearlessness.

Neither of these aides-de-camp were to survive the war, but they both rendered faithful service.

When we came out of the line in January I said good-bye to the Second King Edward's Horse with infinite regret. They were remarkable men, from their commanding officer, Colonel Craddock, right through the regiment. It was just before we left the trenches that I heard the following characteristic conversation between Colonel Craddock's brother, "Shell" Craddock, and Major Hesketh, of Strathcona's Horse. It is not the kind of conversation which is usually told at a League of Nations meeting, but it is really quite appropriate for such

an occasion. Shell Craddock was sixty years of age; he had managed to conceal this fact, and to come out as a subordinate infantry officer carrying his pack. On the day in question the front line was a very disagreeable place. Rain was falling in torrents, the trenches were running with water; the long expected German attack designed to bite off our salient seemed to be coming at last. The bombardment of our support and reserve lines was severe, the bombardment of our front line parapet accurate and intense, much of it being broken down. Casualties were already considerable. I moved along the front line trench, running across the gaps as quickly as I could, for we were of course under continuous machine gun fire. Breathless, I arrived at a bay which was still intact, at the point where the King Edward's Horse and Strathcona's trench garrison joined. There I saw Shell Craddock and Hesketh. This was the conversation:

Hesketh: "They have just sent along a gas alarm. I don't know what has happened to my gas mask. This is the first war I have been in, it doesn't seem much of a show. You have been in others. What were they like."

Shell, in a very slow voice: "My dear old boy, I have been in five other wars and I feel bound to say that I sometimes think this isn't really a gentleman's war. Still we ought not complain. It is the only war we have got, and we must make the most of it."

Mark, not "the best of it," but "the most of it." This truly represents the attitude of mind of the speaker. He was a patriot if ever there was one. I am told that his brother, the admiral who went down with his ships at Coronel, was just such another.

My brigade moved to billets between Abbeville and Eu, while I came to England to see the regiments that were available to complete the Brigade. The Fort Garry Horse, whose headquarters were at Winnipeg were selected, and for the rest of the war they formed the third regiment of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade. They were commanded by Colonel Patterson,

now Brigadier-General Patterson, D.S.O., an officer of great competence and courage. The second in command was an interesting man, Colonel Stevenson, one of the chief forestry officials in Canada. If there was a better revolver shot I never met him. During moments of respite in the Somme battle he used to wade about in the shallow water of the Somme in trench boots and shoot pike with his revolver. I have seen him shoot three without missing one.

When I rejoined my brigade I found my son Frank and Antoine of Orleans. Also our new Brigade-Major, Lawson, affectionately known throughout the army as Bubble Lawson. He had replaced Watt, brother of Sir John French's aide-de-camp, now promoted to command a battalion. His promotion was well deserved, but unfortunately shortly afterwards he had his right leg shot off. Lawson, too, was promoted to command a battalion after rendering all of us Canadians invaluable service. He, alas, was killed.

Our billets were in little French villages between Abbeville and Eu. Except for the complete absence of able-bodied men, or, indeed, any men except little boys and very old men, one would not have known a war was going on. The French families managed to carry on their farming somehow, and never complained about the war, which they said must continue until the Germans had been defeated. Here, as in the villages close to the front line, one could not but admire their steadfast courage. I think the French people were happier quite close to the front line. Although in the villages and farms near the front they suffered heavy casualties nothing would induce them to move, I remember walking along a pavé road near the Bois Grenier one afternoon when the German artillery opened up a mild bombardment with Seventy-sevens. Some of the whizz-bangs, as we called them, burst on the hard surface of the pavée road with a tremendous roar. A little French boy aged seven stood in a doorway surveying the scene quite unperturbed. I shouted to him to get under cover. He shrugged his shoulders and

said: "*Non, non, ces sont des petits.*"

However, here, far from the front line, though the courage was there, happiness was gone.

One interesting episode occurred to Antoine and myself in view of what happened and what was said when we were together in the desperate second battle of Cambrai, of November 30th of the following year. One day I said to Antoine: "We have an afternoon to spare. You must take me to the battlefield of Agincourt, so that I may see the place where my great-great-great-grandfather in a leather jerkin got the better of your great-great-grandpapa in his coat of mail." Antoine agreed, and off we started for Azincourt, as it is now called locally. As we passed through Saint Valerie-sur-Somme and were going along the river side, the car suddenly stopped for no apparent reason. I asked what was the matter, and Antoine said he would get out and look. He was very learned about motor cars, but did not seem to be doing anything very effective inside the bonnet. However, I waited and looked about me. On my right was an old building with a large plaque on the wall; inscribed on it in large letters in French was: "From this point in the year 1066 William the Conqueror started with four hundred sail for the conquest of England, which he completely achieved." I looked down and saw Antoine watching me with a smile. He said: "The car is all right now," then jumped in and drove off. I replied: "Well, when we get to Agincourt we can call it all square." When we arrived, Antoine, who had got a First in History at the Paris University, explained the battle to me in most interesting fashion and great detail. At one place he said: "This is perhaps the saddest spot on French soil except the Cathedral Square at Rouen." I said: "Well, Rouen, of course, is where we wickedly burnt the Maid of Orleans." He answered: "Yes, and this is where your Black Prince killed the prisoners. I daresay there was nothing else for him to do. But, as I say, this is a sad place." Little did I dream that twenty months later he would recall those words

to my memory, when I was confronted with just the same problem. But so it was.

My headquarters were in a château belonging to the Marquis d'Hardivilliers—a lineal descendant of the English Villiers, who commanded the British troops in the Battle of Arcq. It was one of those rare occasions when the French and British fought together. It will be remembered that Henri IV, who commanded the joint forces, won a complete victory. At the close of the day he said to Villiers, "You shall be called Hardivilliers," and knighted him on the field of battle. This was the account which the old marquis gave to me as he proudly showed me a Bayeux tapestry portraying the episode, which hung in the hall. Only ten miles away was the Château d'Eu, where Antoine's father and mother, the Comte and Comtesse d'Eu, lived. The Comtesse d'Eu was the last Empress of Brazil. Antoine remembered very well the Revolution, when his father and mother and all the family were dethroned, put on a battleship and sent back to France. He described it to me as a most polite revolution. Queen Victoria was a great friend of the Comte d'Eu, and stayed at the château more than once. We used to walk about a beautiful terrace, called the Terrasse Victoria, which was built specially so that she might admire the view over Saint Valery. There also, was the eldest of the three sons, Prince Pierre, now happily still alive, and his wife. Prince Pierre had had his right arm shattered as a child, and was, therefore, refused for every branch of the service, although he truly said he could do more things, in the way of physical effort, with one arm than many people could do with two. His wife was an Austrian lady of renowned family, very beautiful, and very gentle and kind. She is the godmother of my youngest son. Her brothers were serving in the Austrian Army, one of them had already been killed. These people showed much kindness to the Canadians of all ranks. One evening Princess Pierre said sadly in her broken English: "This war she become a bother. She ought to stop."

It was hard work reorganising the whole mounted brigade, as originally formed by Lord Kitchener. But in many ways it was a very happy time, though it was overshadowed for me by the death of my beloved private secretary, George Nicholson, who was killed flying.

In April all the cavalry were withdrawn to be "fattened up," as the phrase was, for the coming great offensive. We moved to an area between Hesdin and Saint Pol, where we practised cavalry manœuvres with much zeal. Gough was sent down to inspect all the cavalry brigade and remove the incompetent. Just over two years before I had dismissed him at the time of the Ulster crisis, although I reinstated him the next day. It was his turn now. However, I survived the ordeal. The object of this intense preparation was to use the cavalry to gallop through the breach made by the victorious infantry, and thus turn the enemy's defeat into a rout. The phrase commonly used was that we were to gallop through the "G" in "Gap."

Hardly one of us believed that the operation was in the least degree possible. We knew well enough that if the infantry could break through the whole defensive system beyond the further support trenches and wire entanglements in one day, great things might be done; there is hardly a limit to what cavalry can effect by surprise, especially in modern warfare where great numbers of men become increasingly dependent on fixed lines of communications. But we also knew from bitter experience that in the absence of some entirely new weapon of trench attack, advance must be laborious and slow, giving time to enemy reinforcements to build up fresh defences and wire entanglements, through which no force mounted, or dismounted, can rush.

I was appointed to command one of the leading brigades in this adventure, and, just before the battle, went often to the front, nominally to take some of my new officers to see trench warfare, actually to survey the possible lines of advance. All

through this time I had permission frequently to see my great friend, Foch. He was to command the French part of the attack—a comparatively narrow sector south of the Somme. Although their front was narrow, the preparations were on a most elaborate scale. A whole network of special railway sidings had been built a few miles south-east of Amiens, and a vast reserve of shells had been accumulated. Foch insisted upon an artillery concentration of an unprecedented kind. He told me at the time, and Sir Douglas Haig afterwards verified it in conversation with me, that he had more than three times as many guns per yard of front as we had for our more ambitious attack on his left.

The attack was fixed for July 1st. The cavalry moved up near to the scene of action by night marches. Two days before the battle Sir Henry Norman turned up with M. Painlevé, the French Minister for War. Henry Norman had been appointed by Lord Kitchener to a special mission to the French, designed to collaborate with them in every kind of new invention. I happen to know that this work was wonderfully done, and that many destructive engines of war of the greatest value were perfected by the joint brains of the French and English soldiers and scientists.

On the preceding evening I flew in a reconnaissance aeroplane all over the front to be attacked and some way over the enemy territory beyond. My orders for the next day were to gallop right through to Cambrai, encircle it, and cut the railway lines to the east. Other brigades were to be on my right and left. I tried to make myself believe that the operation was possible, though my reason told me it was not.

On the morning of the battle the cavalry moved up close behind the line of attack. I went forward with one squadron to a fold in the ground, nearly half a mile behind the front line, and about a hundred yards in front of an advanced battery of Eighteen Pounders, firing at their maximum speed. The noise was almost indescribable. About midday when our in-

fantry had advanced a little way I rode forward with a troop and crossed the front line. As we cantered up the valley the infantry cheered. But by that time it was quite clear that we could be of no real use. My horse was shot in the leg, and Antoine's in the neck, but we had few other casualties.

Our new front line was completely held up by intense machine-gun fire. What had happened was this. The French attack on a narrow front south of the Somme had been a complete success, and all their objectives were gained. Our attack just north of the Somme was also successful. Further north, Fricourt had been taken, but north of that again the attack had been a tragic failure.

The cavalry remained in close reserve, for the Germans had been terribly battered, many prisoners had been taken, and it was still hoped to break through.

It is unnecessary for me to describe this great and costly battle in detail, but one or two things I saw may be of interest. I have insisted in this book more than once that no attack should ever be delivered until the man responsible had himself surveyed the position from the front line. The failure to do this was the cause of many avoidable disasters. But on the Somme there was a striking case where the doing of it resulted in unexpected and complete success. General, now Sir Aylmer, Haldane was ordered to attack with his division. A few days after the opening of the battle, in accordance with my orders, I was constantly reconnoitring our new front line, with a view to finding the best place to go through with my cavalry, if and when success attended the efforts of the infantry. I had found a place where it was possible to get beyond our front line and observe to the front, right and left in comparative safety. I told General Haldane this. He said: "That is the very place I want to find." We walked up together, moved along the front line to a place where a corner of the trench was obscured from view and then went slightly down hill to the place I had found. We sat there together for over an hour. There was a bright

sun, but the constant shelling threw up a misty dust, making it very hard to discern individual men: as a consequence we were never spotted. Haldane surveyed the ground with field glasses, and at intervals through my telescope. At the end of an hour we crept back. He said to me: "I have learnt much. I believe the attack to be possible." As a fact, his attack was a complete success. Foch described it to me as "a blessing and a miracle." It certainly made an immense difference. Without doubt the success was largely due to this personal reconnaissance of Haldane's.

As time went on it became apparent that we could not break through. Half my brigade were sent back with the horses, the other half remained to co-operate with the infantry.

This was the hardest time I ever had. I spent four days in each week with my men on the Somme front, and two days supervising the rest of them eighty miles away to the rear. The remaining twenty-four hours were occupied in going there and back again. It was a very cold winter. A bitter frost came and froze the churned-up mud which covered the stricken fields into a hard crust, with a quagmire beneath. Long before this the roads had become almost impassable for wheeled vehicles, ammunition being brought up to the forward guns on horses and mules in panniers. These horses would at intervals break through the crust, and many of them could not be extricated.

At Christmas time we were engaged in building a new front line. We would get along finely for a time until the enemy would decide to stop the work. Then would come a bombardment, and a certain number of men would be hit. Directly it was over we would start building the trench and twisting the wire again. Thus I spent my third Christmas Day in the front line.

So the long drawn out battle of the Somme drew to its melancholy close. As will be seen from the foregoing narrative, one way and another, I had had a front seat all through. My men had never been heavily engaged, although, of course, we

had suffered considerable casualties. As a consequence it was easy to take a detached and impartial view.

It became obvious that attack on the Western Front without the element of surprise, was wrong. The loss of life sustained was so great, and the ground gained so small, that it never could be worth while. Thus, any battle, however large or small preceded by a bombardment designed to break the wire, must be an error of the first magnitude. The reason for this is clear. On the western front lateral communications, especially on the German side, were so good that it was possible to move reinforcements with great rapidity. Given four days' notice, or even two, enough troops could be assembled within striking distance of the hostile attack to foredoom it to ultimate stalemate. This is what happened on the Somme. With my own eyes I saw it again and again. It is true that the enemy suffered very severely in casualties and morale, but in casualties we suffered much more. We were told it was a battle of attrition; so it was. But there was more attrition on our side than on the enemy's. This being so, the marvellous thing to observe was the sustained courage of our troops.

We started with an overwhelmingly superior artillery. But as time went on the Germans brought up more and more guns, and our ammunition supply, as we advanced slowly through what became a sea of mud, was greatly restricted by the difficulties of transport. Thus our troops were exposed to very intense artillery fire. But never once did they waver; even if an attack seemed to them to be hopeless they went on. This did not apply only to the English troops engaged. I have said that the French on our right advanced on a narrow front on the first day with great success, and with slight losses. General Foch himself told me when I received permission to see him, on July 2nd, that the actual losses in killed and wounded on the first day were only one thousand five hundred and ninety. They had captured many thousands of prisoners, and killed or wounded the whole of the

remainder of the garrison in the sector opposed to them. But later on, as they advanced on our right, they were exposed to the same difficulties as ours. Neither did they fail.

The famous French Twentieth Corps were there. This remarkable corps, perhaps the most famous in the history of war, had a record of courage and endurance unparalleled, even in that bloody war. General Balfourier, who then commanded the corps, told me that the whole corps had been replaced five times already in September, 1916. Of course there were a good many fortunate men who had been through unwounded, but the casualties had been five times the original strength. There was a spirit of absolute devotion to duty, reckless courage, combined with real skill in warfare, which was the admiration of us all. I saw much of the Twentieth Corps. At the end of the Battle of the Somme they could say with truth, although they had been engaged in almost every battle on the western front, they had never been set to defend a place they had not held, they had never attacked a place they had not taken.

I had two great friends in the Twentieth Corps, both in a regiment of the *Chasseurs à Pieds*, forming part of the famous *Division de Fer*. One was Commandant Major Pompée. The other was Captain le Duc de Rohan. When we dined together, as we often did, Pompée would loudly proclaim that he was a son of the people. That charming and courageous soul, Lieutenant Trotter, in "Journey's End," recalled Pompée to my memory. The Duc de Rohan belonged to almost the oldest and most famous family in Europe. His war history is a worthy record. It was typical of many brave Frenchmen. He was a member of parliament when war broke out, having retired with the rank of major. He immediately joined up with his cavalry regiment, and went all through the desperate fighting of the first four months of the war, being wounded twice; but he always managed to get back even before his wounds were properly healed. At the end of four months he decided that the cavalry could not be used for some time, so he volunteered

for service in the Chasseurs à Pieds in the Division de Fer, obviously the most dangerous unit to join, for they were like fighting-cocks who were sent to every critical position on the Front. He surrendered his rank and joined as a second lieutenant. He was again wounded severely and again returned. By the time I speak of he had been promoted captain. He and Pompée were inseparable: it was difficult to say which of them admired the other most. One night Antoine and I dined with them in a dug-out near Bray-sur-Somme. We talked long and happily. Amongst other things, Pompée said that they were going to make an attack the next morning but one, and that Rohan was to command the leading company. At midnight the next evening Rohan went out with his faithful servant and crept across "No Man's Land," as was his custom, to have a good look at the German wire. As he lay under the wire, gauging with expert eye the time it would take to cut a way through and the best method of doing it, a German sentry saw him in the dim starlight and shot him stone dead at a range of five yards. The attack next morning was a modified success. Rohan's faithful servant recovered his body. But his valiant soul lives on with those of the private soldiers whom he loved and knew so well—a perpetual example of heroic, selfless devotion.

I lost, as we all did, many close friends during the costly Somme battle, including many of my own men whom, as in Rohan's case, I knew so well—hundreds of them by their Christian names. Raymond Asquith, whom I saw fall. Basil Blackwood, who dined with me the night before he was killed.

We shall, none of us, ever know what the real results of the Somme battle were. That it relieved severe pressure on the French front there can be no doubt. The official view was that if we had confined ourselves to intense bombardment and continuous surprise raids by night, the German forces would not have been withdrawn from Verdun to the same degree. I do not agree with that view. The fact that a slow advance is made does not seriously contribute to the enemy's anxiety, if the total

distance to be traversed before a point of vital strategical import to the enemy is so great that it will take years to achieve. More especially was this the case on the Somme, where the Germans were busily constructing the famous Hindenburg line, on which they could retire and defy the advance to better advantage.

As a result of the Somme battle, and my previous experience, I came to the conclusion that no attack on the Western Front could be of value unless the element of surprise were in it. I determined to avoid those advertised attacks in my own case by every means of expostulation in my power. Conversely, I decided that in my little sphere of action if ever I saw a chance of surprise attack I would take it with or without orders. Years afterwards Douglas Haig said to me: "Lawrence tells me that while you were under my command you made five attacks. Two were without orders and three were against orders." I said: "Why did you not stellenbosch me?" He replied, with a kindly smile: "Because they all succeeded." The Lawrence referred to was, of course, General Sir Herbert Lawrence, who was appointed Chief of the Staff towards the latter end of the war, and to whose real military genius the final victory was largely due.

My son, Frank, with the same ardour that he had expressed in his letter announcing that he was leaving Harrow for the Army a year before, insisted that he should be transferred to the First Battalion of the Hampshire Regiment, to which he had been originally gazetted. When we were relieved and sent back to the coast to prepare for the next offensive, Frank joined his regiment in the extreme advanced line on the Somme Front. There I found him a week later in the snow, already in command of a company. Cheerful, dreamy, but, nevertheless, alert as always.

We were in the same billets as a year before, and renewed acquaintance with the aged farmers and our kind friends at the Château d'Eu. We knew that there was to be another offensive

near Arras, and surmised we should take part in it.

One day in February Frank got leave to come and stay a night with me. We rode round the different units together, Frank on his Arab pony "Akbar," and I on "Warrior." My men crowded round Frank and cheered him as he rode away. Then we rode down to the sea that we both loved so well, and galloped along the firm sand. To the rhythm of the hoof-beats the dreaded words kept coming to me: "Our last ride together." Frank returned to his regiment, and we continued our intensive training.

Soon afterwards we received orders to proceed by forced marches back to the Somme battlefield. On arrival there we heard that the Germans were retiring from the top of the hill overlooking Péronne. I saw the burning dumps. The next morning we moved forward and entered Péronne. The little town had been completely demolished, except for the high wall of the Town Hall. On the top of this was inscribed the legend: "Nicht ärgern nur wündern." I suppose the best translation would be: "Do not be angry, only reflect," or, perhaps: "ponder." The reason for the legend was soon seen as we continued our eastern march. The Germans had issued orders that the country was to be laid waste on an unparalleled scale. Every house was levelled to within one metre of the ground, every tree was cut down, big or small, including the fruit trees, and the gardens. Most extraordinary of all, even the little rose trees on the walls had been cut through just above the ground. We passed an orchard with the trees still standing, and wondered why they had been left untouched. As the spring advanced no leaves appeared and it was found that they had been poisoned at the roots. Of all the unwise things the Germans did, this was the most foolish. Their calculation was that the French would see this utter ruin and, realising that a further advance on the part of the Allies would mean similar devastation, would refuse to go forward. The result, of course, was the exact opposite. The French Army was already some-

what exhausted, and no wonder. But parties were sent from every regiment to view the devastation. Indeed, I took some of them round with me. The result was that they returned to spread renewed ardour amongst their comrades. They did not "ponder," but they were exceedingly angry.

So we advanced, infantry and cavalry together, to about six miles east of Péronne. My headquarters were at a place near Moland, and I received orders to spread my cavalry along a twelve-mile front in support of the infantry.

Next morning, with Geoffrey Brooke, I rode all along this Front from end to end. We soon saw that the Germans, though well placed, with plenty of machine-guns in position, were nevertheless in small numbers. They had few trenches and hardly any wire. Moreover, we perceived that the village of Equancourt, some miles beyond our front line, was the key to the position, and that if captured the Germans would be forced to retire their whole line. Geoffrey and I conceived the idea of carrying this place by surprise mounted attack. But it had to be done at once, for we could see the Germans busily wiring. Antoine d'Orléans, my intelligence officer, crawled a long way forward and drew a sketch of the place. We planned our orders there and then; sent word to the colonels to meet us, timed the attack for 4.30 p.m., and sent them off to gather the men to the place of assembly. My two batteries of artillery, commanded by Elkins, managed to get forward unobserved to within seventeen hundred yards of the German positions. Geoffrey, Antoine and I established ourselves in a hollow just in front of the artillery and waited for the moment. It was an anxious time, for not only was I attacking a place without orders, but I was withdrawing the whole of my troops from where I had been ordered to put them. The attack was an overwhelming success. All three regiments galloped forward to their pre-ordained positions with great speed, and with surprisingly little loss. Strathcona's captured Equancourt and all the Germans who were not killed or captured fled in confusion. Never shall I

forget the joyous moment when Geoffrey Brooke, Elkins, Antoine and I galloped at full speed into Equancourt. It was a tiny little affair, but it was a glorious success.

The next thing to do was to tell the infantry what had happened, and ask them to come forward and occupy the ground won. While officers were going back with the messages I went round the captured positions. Major Critchley, who commanded the squadron which had encircled Equancourt, went round with me in the fading light. He seemed curiously sad and tired in contrast to all his men, who were elated by victory. I asked him to sit down and rest while his officers took me round. But he insisted on coming as far as the most important point. He explained the position to me lucidly but very slowly, and then sat down. I turned to the sergeant-major, who said: "He has been shot through the chest, sir, but he made me promise not to tell until he had finished his work." Will it be believed that this gallant soul had been shot at close range through the lung, but still would not give in till his task was done? We managed to get him to an advanced dressing-station that evening, and to a casualty clearing station next morning. He lingered on for two days, but then, alas, he died, to the grief of every man in Strathcona's and the Brigade.

The coming of the infantry was the merriest sight. The officers whom I had sent back told me that when they delivered their messages, all the infantry, officers and men, jumped up with a shout and began to run. It was a long walk, several miles, but they were still laughing and talking when they arrived. I heard dozens of men say: "No more bloody trenches now." They took over the whole position, and made successful plans for their rations to be brought up to them.

After going round the whole line for a third time with the senior infantry officer, I rode back to my headquarters at Moland. Thick snow was falling, and the farm-house had no roof. However, I took off my clothes, put on woolly pyjamas, curled up in a flea-bag and a mackintosh sheet and let the snow

fall on me. Geoffrey Brooke and Antoine agreed with me that it could snow ink for all we cared.

At 6.30 the next morning I was awakened by Geoffrey Brooke with these words: "Johnnie du Cane, who commands the infantry corps, is outside on his horse in a towering rage." I could hear him roaring. I jumped up and ran out to the ruined doorway in my bare feet. There was General du Cane, sitting on his horse, as angry as could be, with a flow of language of which I had not believed him capable, and which I could not but admire. He wanted to know from me where his infantry were, and why I had ordered them about as if they belonged to me, without any reference to him. I endeavoured to explain that I had sent no orders, only suggestions, which had so appealed to his officers that they had acted on them without delay. While I was saying this I heard the sound of a motor-bicycle ploughing its way through the snow and mud up to the back of the farm. General du Cane's justifiable anger was not in the least appeased by what I said. He told me he would see to it that most severe disciplinary measures should be taken against me. Just at that moment Geoffrey Brooke, who had dressed, came up with a message which the motor-cyclist had brought. It ran as follows: "Heartiest congratulations to you and all under your command on most brilliant feat of arms. Commander-in-Chief." I said to the General: "I am extremely sorry, sir, but will this make any difference?" He said nothing while you might count ten, then burst out into a roar of laughter and said: "Yes, I freely forgive you. Perhaps you will now send an officer of your eccentric command to show me where my men have really got to." When I stayed with Sir John du Cane at Cologne after the war, he then being in command of our troops on the Rhine, he reminded me of this episode, remarking that the arrival of Douglas Haig's telegram was the luckiest thing that had ever happened to me.

We received many other congratulations, notably from General MacAndrew, my Divisional Commander, who decided

to make a similar attack on a larger scale for the capture of Guyencourt, some miles further east. My orders were to take my Brigade round the left flank and encircle the village of Guyencourt from that side. The operation was entirely successful, and I will not describe it in detail. But it was here that Lieutenant Harvey, of Strathcona's Horse, performed a feat of arms so remarkable that it may be of interest for an eye-witness to recount it. Harvey was in command of the leading troop of Strathcona's Horse. Their orders were to gallop over the ridge about half a mile to the left of Guyencourt, right round behind it and establish themselves there. I had had a good look at the position that morning from various angles. But, perhaps owing to the frequent snow squalls, I had not discerned the line of thin but strong wire running from the north-east corner of Guyencourt straight back to the German second position. Harvey got over the ridge with very few casualties, galloping about a hundred yards in front of his troop. Arrived at the back of Guyencourt he found this wire. He turned about and galloped back, waving to his men to follow his movements. I saw him galloping straight towards me, looking to his left and right, and wondered what on earth he was going to do, for I could see a little trench full of Germans firing away with their rifles and one machine-gun. Still at a gallop Harvey turned his horse and rode straight for the trench at great speed. When he got close to it, still miraculously untouched, he realised that his horse would never jump the thin and almost invisible wire. The official account on which his Victoria Cross was awarded tells the rest of the tale.

“Harvey, Lieut. Frederick Maurice Watson (of Lord Strathcona's Horse, which fought as infantry throughout the autumn and winter of 1915-16). For most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty. During an attack by his Regiment on a village, a party of the enemy ran forward

to a wired trench just in front of the village, and opened rapid rifle and machine-gun fire at very close range, causing heavy casualties in the leading troop. At this critical moment when the enemy showed no intention whatever of retiring and fire was still intense, Lieut. Harvey, who was in command of the leading troop, ran forward well ahead of his men and dashed at the trench, still fully manned, jumped the wire, shot the machine-gunner and captured the gun. His most courageous act had undoubtedly had a decisive effect on the success of the operation."

As I rode round Guyencourt a few minutes later with Antoine d'Orléans, I saw a sight which I had not seen since the beginning of the war, a squadron of German cavalry, parading up and down in front of Epéhy, a mile and half to the east of us. I said to him: "Let's have a go at them." He said: "I shouldn't if I were you," and with various arguments he dissuaded me. I afterwards found that they were close up against the Hindenburg line, and any attack, even with fresh horses, must have resulted in disaster.

We rested that night in the German position. They had a fairly elaborate system of dug-outs, most of which had some kind of booby-trap in them. In more than one of these dug-outs I saw a fire neatly laid in a brasier with sticks and coke ready to light; concealed inside was a hand grenade. Others had loose boards, if one trod on them a slab of gun-cotton would go off. Fortunately none of my men were killed by these silly devices, but others who came on positions in the darkness were less fortunate. The biggest booby-trap was in the Town Hall of Bapaume, which blew up with a tremendous bang, killing many, including some civilian officials who had come forward into the newly occupied territory.

From here, in the first week in April, I moved to Athies. We were in due course to take over the infantry line on each side of Vadencourt.

At Athies I had to spend most of my time in writing recommendations for immediate rewards for valour, every one of which was granted. Even at the sombre close of the costly Battle of the Somme I must confess that at that moment I was a very happy man.

CHAPTER XVII

Death of Frank Seely—Fisher's Crater—Tatlow and Antoine d'Orléans—Wounded—Wimereux and England—Second Marriage—Conditions at Paschendaele—First Battle of Cambrai—A Cancelled Attack.

ON the evening of the 14th April I returned from a reconnaissance of the line we had taken over in time for dinner in the cellar of the ruined house, which was my headquarters. Some kind friend had brought us a couple of bottles of champagne. We were the merriest party imaginable. Hardly had we begun when Geoffrey Brooke asked me to come into the next cellar. He told me that my Frank had been killed leading his company in the Battle of Arras. I started off there and then with a faint glimmer of hope that he might only be dangerously wounded. Next morning I wandered about the battlefield of Arras, not caring where I went so long as I could find some trace of my boy. At last I found his Company Commander of the First Battalion of the Hampshire Regiment. They were holding on by their eyelids to an advanced trench on a forward slope. He said kind things about my son; his courage and the love his men bore to him. It was all the consolation he could give me, but it was the best. He lies buried at Haute Avesnes between a South African and an Irish soldier.

I returned heart-broken to Athies, and next day took over the front line from the Omignon River to in front of St. Quentin. I rode to a point near Le Verguier. It was a most curious position.

The front line trenches, instead of being the usual distance of from fifty to two hundred yards apart, were separated by a wide "No Man's Land," about a mile in breadth, of rolling grass country. The only obstructions in this broad expanse were a large crater in a road on the extreme right of our



CAPTAIN PRINCE ANTOINE D'ORLEANS, M.C.
Chevalier Legion d'Honneur. Royal Canadian Dragoons
From the Portrait by A. J. Munnings, R.A. Painted March, 1918

position, about a hundred yards from our front line; in the centre, a small wood, and a quarter of a mile behind this wood a row of stunted bushes, concealing some dug-outs. Unfortunately, for our comfort, the Germans were in possession of all these posts, and from them we were exposed to trench mortar fire.

We had made a rule, in the many sectors of the line we had held, to make No Man's Land our own territory by patrolling it in sufficient strength at night to drive away any enemy patrols. This we had always succeeded in doing. As a consequence of this rule we behaved in what was thought by some to be an eccentric fashion. For instance, we never sent up flares at night, for patrols were always out. It was curious to watch the star-shells going up from the front line as far as the eye could see to right and left, and in the centre one black patch in complete darkness. Another result was that when all the rest of the Army stood to arms at daybreak we all went to bed, except for a few sentries. We knew very well that if we could hold off the Germans in the hours of darkness, we had certainly got the measure of them when dawn came. Our plan may have been, and was, eccentric, but I am sure it was right. In this case a new factor had arisen. The enemy were strongly posted in No Man's Land, in well-concealed positions, and we could not make that land ours until we had captured those positions.

On the third day after much reconnaissance, we drove the Germans out of the wood and occupied the front face of it. There remained Fisher's Crater and the bushes and dug-outs beyond.

It is worth describing the capture of Fisher's Crater, because of the remarkable courage and skill displayed. An attack had been made on the place when the British had first occupied the line, and had been bloodily repulsed. So the Germans knew exactly what to expect. The first thing was to find out the exact features of this curious redoubt, and the approximate number of the garrison. Antoine d'Orléans, who had been promoted my

aide-de-camp after my son's transfer to the Hampshires, remained Intelligence Officer. He volunteered to find out all the necessary particulars about the crater. When he told me of his plan I wanted to veto it, because of the tremendous risk involved; but he so insisted, that I let him go. There was a slope above Fisher's Crater in No Man's Land, covered with bent grass and heath, similar in colour to the grass on our side of the line. With his telescope he spotted a place about two hundred yards from the crater, looking straight down into it, where the colour exactly matched his khaki clothes. He took an accurate bearing of this place, and one dark night crept out to it an hour before the first streak of dawn. I crawled a little way with him then left him, with a very heavy heart, to continue his extraordinarily hazardous enterprise. He then established himself there, not disturbing the ground in the least, and lay out the whole eighteen or twenty hours of daylight, watching, counting and drawing. When daylight came we scanned the place with field-glasses. But although we knew where to look, so cleverly had he concealed himself and so still did he lie that he was invisible. At about eleven o'clock that evening he returned, with an exact account of the numbers of the enemy; the number of sentries; where they were placed; the exact position of the trench mortar and the machine-guns; the number of dug-outs, with the number of men occupying each; the exact position of the wire, even down to the position of the standards, and the number of strands all portrayed on a beautifully drawn little map. When we took the place we found that this map and his description were accurate in every detail. It was an amazingly brave thing to do, for, after nearly three years of warfare, he knew as well as anyone that troops in advanced positions as those Germans in Fisher's Crater were, exercise great vigilance as their only chance of safety.

Next morning, from Antoine's map, we made a replica of the whole position, in a place about two miles behind our line. We had a number of mackintosh sheets ready to cover it up if

a German aeroplane came over, so that they might not guess what we were up to. Then we practised the attack, which was to be made under cover of an intense machine-gun barrage. Two nights later we delivered the attack. Tatlow, of Strathcona's Horse, was in command of the party. I crept to a point in the front line, about four hundred yards from the crater. With me was a squadron which was going to rush forward in support if the attack was not at once successful. It was anxious work waiting. At last the moment came. The signal was the bursting of the shell of a particular gun. Hardly had the vibrations of the burst died away before the air was rent with terrible, angry shouts, followed by screams of surprise, fright and pain. I confess than even after taking part in so many desperate battles, my heart stood still at those awe-inspiring and ghastly sounds of human rage and fright. I ran down to the crater and met my valiant men returning with a quantity of prisoners. They were very excited and happy; hurrying on the Germans with cheerful exhortations: "Get along, Fritz," "Hurry up, old bean," and the like. We were quite safe for the moment, for, of course, the Germans could not possibly tell who had won and who occupied the ground. Then as we approached our front line, I said: "Where is Tatlow?" They said: "He is in charge of the rear party, sir." In the dim light I ran back to the last man and asked: "Where is Mr. Tatlow?" They said: "He is in front." I was furious—the only time I was ever angry with Strathcona's—and told them so. Taking two men I ran back to the crater. Climbing out of it, with his charming quizzical smile, was my friend Jackie Tatlow, loaded with German rifles and smoking a cigarette. I said: "What on earth are you doing here?" He replied: "I am sorry if I am late, sir, but I thought I might as well have a last look round to make sure we had left no Germans behind, and I thought I might bring some souvenirs along with me." I never saw a man less excited, though I afterwards learnt he had killed three Germans in as many seconds in the fierce hand to hand fight

that ensued when he first jumped over the wire and into the crater. Tatlow received the Military Cross. So did Antoine d'Orléans. I think it will be conceded that they deserved it.

It only remained to clear up the bushes and dug-outs for No Man's Land to be finally ours. It was a minor operation, though it turned out to be of major importance to myself.

The Fort Garry Horse were to carry out the attack with a troop commanded by Butterfield, a very gallant young officer, who had recently been promoted from the ranks. The party were to start from the centre of our line, while, at the given moment, our heavy machine-guns were to open very heavy fire from the left of our line. When the place was captured the machine-guns were to gallop along a little roadway behind our second line of wire, so as to deliver overhead fire to cover the return of the attackers. I arranged to accompany Butterfield's party for a short distance, then to gallop along the same roadway, up which the guns were to come, to the place in the front line where Colonel Patterson, the Regimental Commander, had his Poste de Commandement. I duly saw them off, waited for the machine-gun barrage to start, then jumped on my pony "Akbar" and commenced to gallop along the track. There had been a heavy shower of rain, making the ground very slippery. When I had got about half-way, the Germans opened up with their return strafe. A shell burst about a foot in front of my pony's nose, and he instantly fell over sideways like a stone, with me firmly fixed on his back. I heard my collar-bone crack as I hit the ground and immediately felt acute pain in my shoulder, arm, and left leg. Akbar lay quite still, and I presumed he was dead. I tried to wriggle out, but the pain was so severe that I gave it up. Then above the sound of the occasional shells, I heard the rattle of our heavy machine-guns, with their limbers, galloping towards me. I was right in the centre of the track, and it was almost pitch dark. I knew that they would not see or hear me, and that they must pass right over me. As I moved, the pain was so great that I almost

gave up the attempt. But the love of life was strong, and I put my right leg up against the pony's back and gave a tremendous push. The pony was only slightly wounded, and stunned; the movement woke him up, he rolled to his feet and galloped away. The machine-guns were within a hundred yards, and going at full speed. So, in spite of the almost unbearable pain, I managed to roll over three times, and they thundered past, the nearest within six inches of my head. I shouted as they went by, but, of course, they did not hear me. I lay there in the dim light, and remember thinking that at last my time had come. It seemed to me many hours before help came, though, in fact, it was not more than half an hour. My faithful orderly, Corporal King, found me, brought stretcher-bearers, and I was carried to Colonel Patterson's headquarters. A horse ambulance had been sent for and had arrived. Kind Colonel Patterson wanted to send me straight away, but I said I must wait and hear the result of the raid. It was fortunate I did so, for soon after Butterfield returned, victorious, but with a bayonet wound through the body—he had killed his German—with him were three other wounded men, one severely. They put me and the dangerously wounded man in the ambulance and we started off, over the bumpy ground, for the Advanced Dressing Station, some mile in rear. It was a painful journey, but I reflected on the hundred of thousands of men who had endured worse things, and knew I could not complain.

The poor man on the opposite stretcher began to wander as we bumped and rolled along. I had seen so many men die of wounds, that I knew his end was near. First he talked about the attack, in disjointed sentences; then he began to swear at his enemies of an hour ago; then his voice changed. Three times he called "Mother." Then he died. It is a strange and touching thing that when men die quickly after dangerous wounds in almost every case "Mother" is the last word that crosses their lips.

My poor friend was lifted out dead, and I was carried into the dug-out. The doctor patched me up. I had lost a little blood externally, though a great deal internally. He wanted to send me straight on to the Casualty Clearing Station, near Roisel. But, though very faint, I had strength enough to say that I must be taken to my headquarters, half a mile away. Finally he agreed. At the Casualty Clearing Station they told me I was quite right, because I should probably have died on the longer journey. Early next morning they moved me to the Casualty Clearing Station—as we called the advanced hospitals. I cannot describe the kindness and skill of the doctors and nurses at this C.C.S. It was well within artillery range, and shells were dropping about from time to time. But the explosions made no difference whatever to the staff.

They took an X-ray of my left side, and found that my collar-bone was broken in two places; my shoulder-blade fractured, a rib put out of place, and four complete fractures of the bone of the ankle. Two days before I wrote these words I met the doctor who took the X-ray picture. He remarked that he was delighted to see me alive, and astonished that I could walk without a limp and move my left arm freely. To his great amusement and surprise I told him of the homeopathic cure, to which I refer in my account of the second Battle of Cambrai.

In the bed on my right was a man with three bullet wounds through his lungs and stomach. On my left was a cheerful young man with a slight touch of bronchitis aggravated by gas. We were attended by an angel in human shape, called Betty. Certainly I owe my life to her. But I cannot find where she is. It was touching to see how the faces of the dying men lit up as Betty came to tend them. On the second day screens were put round the poor man on my right, and I knew that he had died. The man on the other side of me got perfectly well and walked out of the hospital on Betty's arm.

Those who have been in a casualty clearing station will agree

with me, that whatever the pain one suffered, it was like a little bit of heaven to be so kindly cared for so near the front line.

In a few days the internal bleeding stopped, and I was carried to a hospital train bound for Wimereux, near Boulogne. There again a wonderfully kind, gentle and efficient nurse tended and comforted me during six hours of acute pain. But at Wimereux I soon began to get well.

The Division was out of the line, so Antoine came to stay near by.

The Queen came to see us. I was well enough to be carried downstairs. She talked to each of us, and told me she had seen my children, calling them by their names. Then she said some touching words about my son Frank, who had been killed at the Battle of Arras. I mention all this because it was indeed a wonderful thing that in the case of every man to whom the Queen spoke, in my hearing, she had something to say, as in my own case, showing that she knew and cared about each one of us individually. It is impossible for me to exaggerate the effect for good which the Queen's visit had on all the patients at Wimereux, and one knows that it was just the same in a hundred other hospitals at the Front and at home.

In a fortnight I was moved to England, and so to my home at Brooke.

During this brief leave I married the daughter of Lord Elibank, sister of my great friends Alick and Arthur Murray and widow of my valiant friend George Nicholson.

At intervals I got letters from my Canadian Brigade, imploring me to come back again as soon as I could. In spite of rapidly improving health, due to the incredible happiness of my marriage and the joy of being with my children again, I still could only walk with difficulty, and could hardly use my left arm at all.

Now I must make a confession of wickedness. For the first and last time during the war I took full advantage of the fact that I had been Secretary of State. An eminent medical friend

of mine signed a document not without persuasion, saying that I was completely fit for service abroad. This precious warrant was duly passed through the War Office, though I did not dare to present it in person, and I returned to France.

Antoine met me at Boulogne, telling me that my headquarters were near Saint-Pol. He was overjoyed to see me, but was very reserved and uncommunicative. I could not make out why he would not tell me which side of Saint-Pol our destination lay. At last we arrived in the little square. To my astonishment there were loud cheers from a crowd of men. I saw an old-fashioned char-a-banc with four horses and one of my officers on the box. I was hoisted up to the box beside him, and for three miles went through cheering crowds. The whole of my Brigade turned out, waving their hats and firing off Verey lights on each side of the road. Truth to tell, I was so exhausted with my journey and with the pain of being hoisted on to the box that I hardly knew what to do. But it really was a most affecting homecoming.

I found Colonel Patterson, who had been commanding the Brigade during my absence, and my well-beloved friend, Geoffrey Brooke. Between them they had carried out a brilliant attack not long before, and the Brigade was in fine form.

We were again to be fattened up to gallop through the "G" in "Gap." This time at Paschendaele. I went up to look round the battlefield, and saw at once that all hope of cavalry action was gone. There had been heavy rain, and Flanders was beginning to be a quagmire, the ground was already giving way. Marshal Condé has described this area; he says that there appears to be a thin crust of sound earth resting on a quagmire below. He records his opinion that it is hopeless to attempt an offensive campaign in this region except in the months of midsummer. But the French were hard pressed, and urged us to pin the enemy by continued attack.

Accordingly we received orders to move up to the neighbour-

hood of Ypres, and to attempt to break through to Roulers. It became necessary for me to go to Paschendaele, which we had recently captured, to see in person what the situation really was. Antoine and I motored through Ypres, and then joined our horses. We rode on a corduroy track a little way beyond St. Julien till our horses could go no further, indeed, mine sank up to his belly in the mud. I left behind every little bit of heavy equipment, even giving my gas-mask to Corporal King, my orderly, who was stronger than I. Even so, with nothing to carry except a walking-stick, it took me three hours to get to Paschendaele. The only way to get along without sticking in the mud was to walk round the edges of the craters, formed by the shells, from which the water drained away, leaving a sounder crust. At last we reached the ruins of Paschendaele. It was a scene of mud and misery, almost impossible to describe. Under a piece of corrugated iron roofing I found the man commanding the battalion I sought. All the senior officers had been killed, and he had only a hundred and twenty men left. But he was most cheerful, and roared with laughter when I told him the reason for my visit. He was pleased but astonished beyond measure to see a General. One thing he said which sticks in my memory: "I am afraid all talk of an attack, even on foot, is quite hopeless, for even if all the Germans went away the deep mud would prevent us moving forward at all." This was perfectly true. The ground was so churned up with shells that the top foot or so was like pea soup, and below that a glutinous mass of clay, out of which it was almost impossible to pull one's feet. We gave him all the cigarettes we had and a flask of brandy, and retraced our steps.

One curious thing was that both the English and the Germans were so intensely miserable that they did not bother to shoot at each other. Although they were within fifty yards of us, not a shot was fired at us either going or returning. Big shells were whining over our heads and bursting in all directions. But of rifle fire there was none.

That night, on my return, I was summoned to a conference at Poperinghe. Sir Herbert Plumer, the Army Commander, presided, General Currie, commanding the Canadian Corps, was also present. Currie had also made some personal reconnaissances of the artillery position. He produced a map showing the positions of the various batteries, and explained: "They are not there." "How do you know?" asked Plumer. "Because I walked all over this region, and many of the guns have disappeared altogether into the mud." Currie was very stiff about the folly of attempting to advance with his Canadians. He loved his men, and was determined to give them a decent chance. But it was dangerous to say these things, and, as on other occasions, he showed great courage in saying what he did. Fortunately Plumer agreed with him, and the long-drawn-out battle came to a close. I believe it was the bloodiest trench battle of the whole war on the Western Front, even including Verdun and the Somme.

So we left the stricken field and marched south. On the way I was summoned to the advanced General Headquarters, near St. Omer, where I saw Lord Esher. He told me of the *pour parlors* for peace that were going on, and asked me what I thought of them. I said it all depended on the terms. In my view the Germans were nearing the end of their tether, but we were not much stronger. We continued our march to villages west of Hesdin to be "fattened up" for another attack.

Soon after the Battle of Paschendaele came to its melancholy end, I was told, in the strictest secrecy, of the impending tank attack; I was to command the leading brigade of cavalry. At last the Tank Corps were to be allowed to show what they could do in large numbers on sound ground.

The secret of this attack was so well kept that not only did the Germans know nothing about it, but, as I happen to know, our own Cabinet had not the least idea of it until after the event. The Cambrai Front had been kept very quiet, and every means known to the Secret Service was adopted to divert

suspicion to other portions of the line. The attack was well devised, with one, quite extraordinary, exception. How the place of attack could have been chosen is, and must always remain, a complete mystery. The object was to break the enemy's line right through all systems of trenches, and beyond the line of any but the heaviest long-range guns. The attacking troops would, therefore, arrive in open country with no wire, and very few enemy troops. The whole of the British, Canadian and Indian cavalry, and a large portion of the French cavalry, too, were to break through and turn to right and left, thus taking a large portion of the enemy in rear. Now comes the mystery. The distance to be travelled by the tanks in order to arrive in open country was about four miles. Will it be believed that at the point selected for attack there was the one obstacle on the whole of the Western Front which formed an insurmountable barrier to the cavalry—the Canal de l'Escaut. Horses can cross almost anything; they can even swim broad rivers, as they have very often done in war. But the one thing they cannot get over, unless they can bridge it, is a canal with perpendicular banks. They can get in, but they cannot get out. We were told that the tanks would cross by the existing bridges—in the case of the attack which I was to lead, by the bridge at Masnieres. It seemed to us certain that either the bridges would be mined, or that the tanks would fall through with their own weight.

On the night before the battle, as I always did on the eve of any attack, or, indeed, on every occasion when I was in the front line, I went to the nearest aerodrome and got a pilot to take me over the country. It was fortunate that I did so, because I spotted a sunken road, with no obstructions in it, leading through the German support lines to Masnieres. We flew low over the whole of the area, as the pilot had done before from time to time. One German machine was droning away a few miles to our right, otherwise there was a strange hush. I saw the Canal at Masnieres, and wondered what chance there was

of our crossing it by the bridge. Clearly it was impossible to get over it at any other place in that neighbourhood.

The next morning the attack took place, it was a complete and overwhelming success on a four-mile front. The tanks burst their way through every obstacle, killing great numbers of Germans as they passed, leaving the rest to be captured by the oncoming infantry and cavalry. In a few brief hours we captured more than eight thousand prisoners and over eight hundred guns. It was wonderful to be cantering along behind one of the tanks, with hardly a British casualty to be seen. My Brigade was held up at a very deep support trench, but we wheeled right-handed into the sunken road I had seen from the air the night before, and we thundered towards the village of Masnieres. I left my Brigade about a mile short of Masnieres, and galloped with my Brigade Major, Geoffrey Brooke, my aide-de-camp, Prince Antoine d'Orléans, and six orderlies close behind the tank which was making for the bridge.

My instructions were, as soon as the tank had crossed the bridge, to take my Brigade over and gallop towards and beyond Cambrai. As the event proved, had the bridge remained intact, this we could easily have done. With the thousands of horse-men and machine-guns supporting us, the results might well have spelt a disaster of the first magnitude to the German Army. The tank rumbled along the street leading straight to the bridge, I, on my faithful Warrior, cantering along behind it. It got on to the middle of the bridge, but then there was a loud bang and crash, and down went the tank and bridge together into the canal. At the same moment there was a burst of rifle fire from the opposite side of the canal, and one or two of my orderlies were hit. I sent back a message at once reporting this disaster, saying that I would endeavour to bridge the canal elsewhere. At the same time I sent for my Brigade to come to the outskirts of Masnieres. One squadron was sent to try to find a means of bridging the canal further to the south. That redoubtable soldier, Tiny Walker, my machine-gun officer,

now commanding the Machine-gun Corps of Canada, took on the job. He managed to find two baulks of timber near a demolished lock, and, under cover of continuous rifle fire directed on every nook and cranny in the buildings opposite, got this narrow structure into position. The squadron, commanded by Strachan, of Fort Garry Horse, led their horses across and galloped into the open country, with the intention of silencing a German battery that was firing at us at about eight hundred yards' range. The winter's afternoon was already closing in when Strachan delivered his attack. It was completely successful; the German gunners were all killed with the sword, and the breech blocks of the guns taken out. Strachan had much difficulty in finding his way back, but he succeeded in bringing all his men to our lines. He received the Victoria Cross for his gallant exploit.

Meantime, I had received orders from Divisional Headquarters to engage my troops no further, as the attack on the left had been held up, and the canal could not be crossed elsewhere. Moreover, at Masnieres the enemy resistance was stiffening, and an increasing volume of fire came from the houses to the left of the bridge on the opposite bank. Our infantry had managed to get a foothold over the canal on the right of Masnieres, but they could not dislodge the enemy infantry from the village itself. It would, of course, have been madness to have sent more men over the little bridge we had made, even if it had been possible to get them across in face of the increased rifle fire. They would have been lost in the darkness, and could have done no good. More especially was this the case, seeing that the Germans were still in possession of the high ridge called the Crevecœur Spur, which lay to our right and our right rear.

I had established my headquarters in a little house on the main road about a hundred yards from the broken bridge. Here were brought all the refugees, who streamed across our improvised bridge from the other side. I had been told secretly

to expect some of own own spies, who would give a password, which was "Le Roi Edouard VII." The first few that were brought in to me said nothing, but I shall never forget the strange moment when a peasant, with a bundle, came up to where I was sitting, making notes of all they said by the light of a single candle, and whispered in my ear: "Le Roi Edouard VII." Then he told me he feared that most of the others had been killed, but while I kept him waiting two more came, who gave the same password. I had a car ready, and in it sent them off to General Headquarters.

Early next morning with Brooke and Antoine I galloped off to the right towards the Crevecoeur Spur. The road ran parallel with the canal and about a hundred yards from it. About a mile and a half from my headquarters along this road was an isolated farmhouse. There were a few long range bullets from the Crevecoeur Spur, so we hid our horses behind the farm buildings. Then we anxiously scanned the canal for signs of the enemy. We saw none. I was planning to get a bridge built here, and was looking through my field glasses, with Antoine d'Orleans beside me, when, all at once—Bang! A bullet fired from close range hit the brick wall about an inch above Antoine's head, covering his cap and coat with brick dust. That extraordinary man did not move, and did not even flinch. He remarked slowly: "Don't you think we could observe the enemy just as well from the other side of the wall?" We hastily got there, but not until one or two of our party had been hit. Alas, the enemy were in some strength, and all idea of crossing at that point was out of the question.

I returned to my headquarters and reported the situation. I added that it seemed to me that we had better either take the Crevecoeur Spur or evacuate Masnieres, as we seemed to be in an extremely dangerous salient. That evening, about six o'clock, I received an order to cross the canal with my brigade dismounted, and, under cover of darkness, surround the little village of Rumilly, a long straggling village lying about a mile

and a half beyond the broken bridge, towards Cambrai. I knew it to be the most desperate enterprise that I had ever been asked to undertake still, of course, we must try. I sent for my colonels, explained by the aid of a map the plan of attack which Geoffrey Brooke and I had thought out together. It was a very dark night, but the features of the country were pretty clear. We should not lose our way, and I was sure that we could get round Rumilly. One certain rule in war is that you can do anything by night if you know the way and know your plan, provided always that the enemy knows neither. What would happen to us next was another matter. We should be attacked heavily from the rear by the Germans in the village of Rumilly itself, and also from the front by the reinforcements which were certainly coming from Cambrai; still we would dig ourselves in and fight it out. I have said that life to me has been full of glorious adventures. Frankly, I dreaded this one. I was certain in my own mind that few, if any, of us would survive. However, we started; in a night attack it is always best for the commander to lead, so off I went with Geoffrey Brooke and Antoine, keeping close to the southern wall of the little main street, so as to avoid the continual bullets which were splintering on the pavement in the centre of the road and on the north side. I felt very lonely without my horse, Warrior. The rest of Strathcona's Horse, now commanded by Docherty, were following in single file. We had just got to a corner where an alleyway on the right led to our little bridge over the canal, when I heard galloping hoofs coming from behind. This caused a redoubled burst of enemy rifle fire from the other side of the canal, and several of my men were hit. In a moment a staff officer came running up to me, whispering breathlessly: "Is that General Seely?" I replied: "Yes." He then said: "Your attack is cancelled. Here is the message." Thus, for the second time, my brigade was saved from almost certain extinction by a margin of minutes.

CHAPTER XVIII

Prince Ruprecht of Bavaria—Second Battle of Cambrai—"Remember Agincourt"—A Quaint Episode and a Unique Cure—Continued Value of Cavalry—A "Model Raid"—Munnings and Orpen—March 1918—The Moreuil Ridge—Lieutenant Flowerdew V.C.—Capture of Rifle Wood—Gassed and Ordered Home—Tributes to the Canadians.

THE day after this reprieve our place was taken by an infantry brigade, and we went into reserve, some five miles behind our original front line.

Although it had proved impossible to exploit the victory for the reasons I have already given, this first Cambrai battle was a great tactical success. For the first time on the Western Front, an attack had been made, in which, at small cost to the attacking side, many thousands of the enemy were killed and wounded; many thousands of unwounded captured, together with many hundreds of guns. Indeed, on the right of the attack, where I was, on the first day, our losses must have been less than a tenth of those of the enemy.

Seven years later I had a long interview with Prince Ruprecht of Bavaria, at Munich. It will be remembered that Prince Ruprecht commanded the German Army on this portion of the Western Front. He was one of the few men of the German High Command who retained the confidence and affection of his troops right up to the end. We discussed both battles of Cambrai; what he told me was of great interest. He said that the attack of November 20th fell like a thunderbolt, and that its success filled Ludendorf with alarm. The effect on the German troops was most demoralising. The wildest rumours flew about as to the number of tanks, their size and power. Prince Ruprecht told me he realised that the only way

CAMBRAI, NOV. 20TH - DE

British Line Nov: 20th 1917

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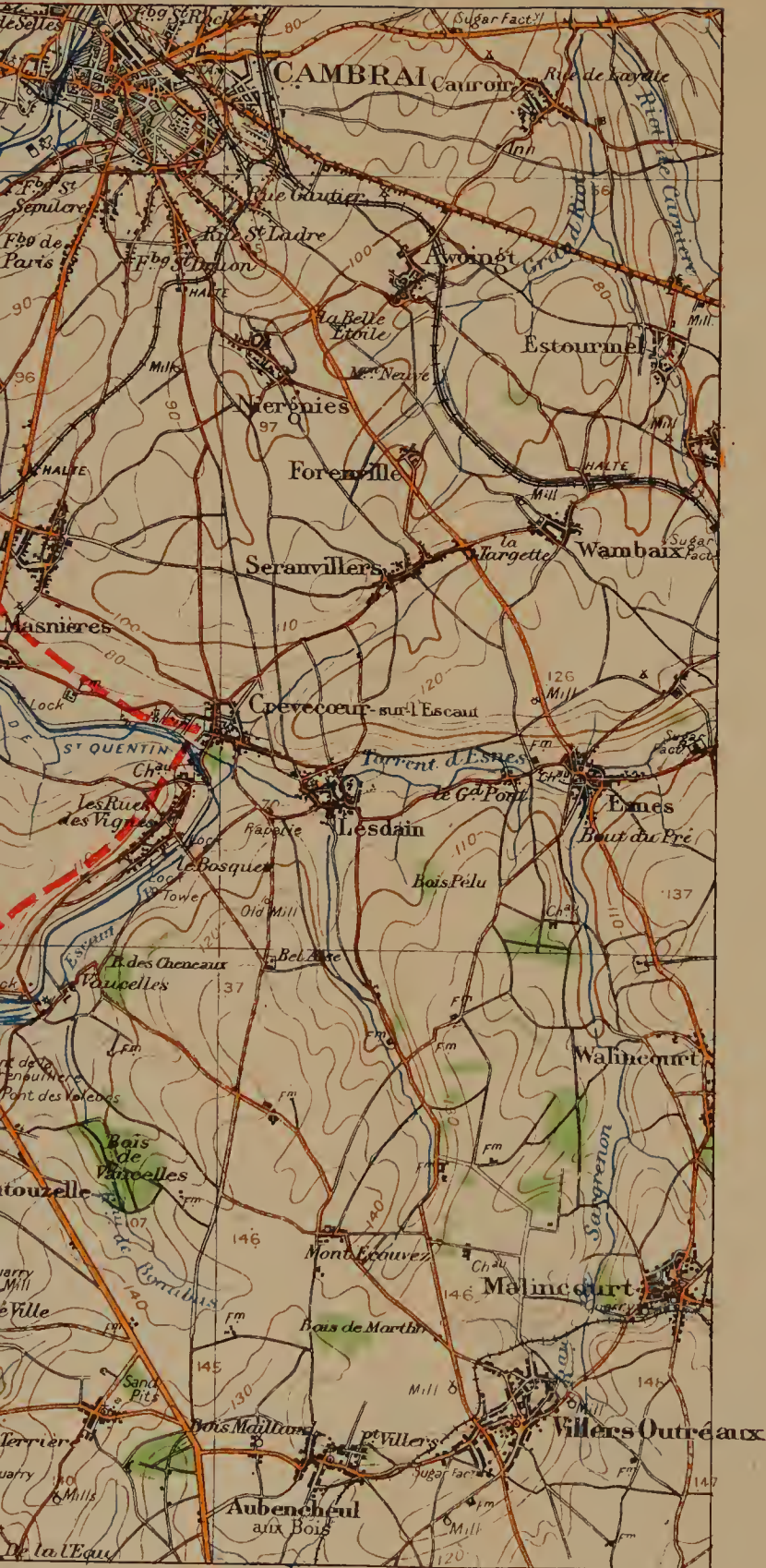
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to restore confidence was to make a counter attack in the same place. Immediately reinforcements were sent to Cambrai and on to Rumilly, while fresh troops were collected from distant parts of the front to launch the counter attack. It was plain to him that we—the British—were in a more dangerous salient than any troops on the Western Front had ever been, except perhaps the Germans at St. Mihiel; it was equally clear to him that the continued possession by his troops of the Crevecoeur Spur provided good observation and a first-class jumping-off ground.

It would be more convenient if I postponed his comments on the second battle of Cambrai, which commenced on November 30th, until I have described that battle, as I saw it, where my brigade played a conspicuous part.

When we arrived at our billets on November 26th I was informed that we would march in a day or two to rest billets near the sea coast, there to have our heavy casualties in horses replaced, and to receive reinforcements to make up the, happily, small casualties in men. There seems a fate about it, but I know that others have had the same experience; whenever you are told that you are to have a long rest it is almost always a prelude to going into desperate action. So it proved in this case. The place we were to go to was chosen, even the exact billets settled; the orders for our westward march were drawn up. On the morning of November 30th, as I was peacefully sleeping, Geoffrey Brooke came in with the news that there had been a serious disaster in the neighbourhood from which we had just come. Our Divisional Commander was at a cross roads three miles east, and would I bring the brigade there with all speed. I jumped out of bed, swallowed some breakfast while I dressed, and in a quarter of an hour was galloping away with Prince Antoine and two orderlies, leaving Geoffrey Brooke to bring the brigade along with the least possible delay.

I found the Divisional Commander, General MacAndrew, at the cross roads. He told me that there had been a disaster of

real magnitude; that several thousand prisoners had been captured already. He reminded me afterwards of my comment: "I suppose you would like us just to blow into the battle and see what we can do." To which he replied: "That's about it. Let me know where you are and I'll support you." We went forward to a point about two miles nearer the battle, just out of rifle range, where he established his advance headquarters near a large ash tree splintered by shell fire. I sent back for my brigade to assemble close by, in a fold of ground. Then I rode to right and left, trying to see what the position was. I found several weary officers and men returning, who were the survivors of that morning's fierce battle. I told the unwounded officers and men to wait in a hollow till my men came up, then they could support the attack which I had planned.

I had seen and heard enough to surmise that the ridge immediately in front of us was lightly held; it seemed the best plan to endeavour to capture this by a mounted attack, and then press forward into the battlefield on foot. So far as I could see with a good telescope there was only one strand of wire between us and the ridge. Accordingly, when the brigade was assembled in the hollow, I brought the commanding officers forward and showed them the plan of attack, to which they agreed. The Royal Canadian Dragoons were to gallop the ridge. As soon as they had got a foothold there the rest were to follow. The leading squadron of Dragoons was skilfully commanded, and managed to get to a thick fringe of wood unobserved, where I joined them with Geoffrey Brooke and Antoine. Then they galloped the ridge; some of the horses were caught in the wire, but the rest got over, and, in less time than it takes to tell, a great proportion of this squadron had established themselves on the ridge. They captured a considerable number of Germans and opened a tremendous rifle fire. Docherty led Strathcona's Horse to the right and left of the ridge, and the Fort Garry Horse came up in support. My two batteries of artillery got forward observers on to the ridge and opened effective fire.

I have said that a good many stragglers from the battle gallantly came forward with me. Amongst others we found a curious and most interesting party—the same American engineers whom we had seen twelve days before, engaged in making a light railway some five miles behind the front line. They were pursuing their peaceful avocations near to Gouzaucourt, which had been close to the front line before our successful advance on November 21st. They belonged to the 11th Engineers (Railway). I remember Colonel Hoffman was the Regimental Commander, and I think Captain Hulsant was commanding the Gouzaucourt party. Then the German avalanche fell upon them. Some had rifles with them; in the case of others they were far away; but that made no difference to these gallant Yankees; with spade and pick axes they fell upon the advancing Germans, and although many were knocked out, I was assured that they had got the best of it in a hand-to-hand combat. It was a very brave thing to do, for surrender would have been easy, and, just for once, justifiable. When I came home on leave a month later I gave some account of this at a luncheon, given by Sir Max Aitken, now Lord Beaverbrook (whose manifold services to the Canadian Cavalry Brigade I now gratefully acknowledge). I do not know if this account has reached America from other sources, but I am glad to put it on record now.

We had driven a deep wedge into the German force. So great was the success of this attack, that in the evening I received a message from Strathcona's that they had captured eight hundred prisoners and a great number of machine guns. I had seen the regiment suffer heavy casualties in taking their position, so I knew that there could not be more than two hundred of them. It seemed a little difficult for two hundred to manage the eight hundred in the darkness. I was only a short distance away, still further to the right, when this report reached me, and I went with Antoine d'Orléans to see the prisoners. There they were, sure enough—many hundreds

of them, with their rifles on the ground. But I saw at once that many of them were already beginning to realise that they greatly outnumbered their captors. I had a strange conversation with Antoine, which truth compels me to record. I said: "These men will all break away. They will then tell the Germans exactly where we are and how few we are. Then our chance of surviving will be remote. I suppose some people would shoot them all now while they had the chance." He replied; gravely: "Remember Agincourt, and the results which followed." I did remember Agincourt and the killing of the prisoners in precisely similar circumstances; also the resulting bitterness of the French, which lasted for centuries. I hope and believe that in any case I should not have committed the awful crime of directing them to be shot. Moreover, I believe my men, for the first time, would have disobeyed the order and refused to be a party to such wickedness. Nevertheless it was only too plain that disaster might follow their escape. Things turned out as I was sure they would. We could spare but few men from the firing line, for we were greatly outnumbered. We shepherded the prisoners away from their rifles and put them in old trenches and ditches with sentries guarding them. But while the Germans were making a counter attack in the darkness, although the attack was repulsed, the prisoners streamed away. Some hundreds of them were shot with their own machine guns, which we had captured in large quantities, but hundreds more got clear away, to give a full account of our positions and numbers to the enemy.

Then followed two really desperate days and nights. The enemy rifle and machine gun fire was unceasing, and in great volume. All that night and during the following morning shell fire became severe also. But my men behaved with skill no less remarkable than their courage. The Germans attacked in large numbers, but we had so many German machine guns and unlimited ammunition that every attack was repulsed. A light railway embankment ran opposite the centre of our line,

and in one place the Germans still held it. We were suffering heavy casualties by rifle fire from this place. I decided that it would save lives in the end to capture it. I sent orders to Docherty, commanding Strathcona's. He delivered the attack in the failing light at 4.30 that evening of December 1st. I told him we would support the attack with all the covering fire we could muster. He said: "It is the only thing to do, and I think we shall succeed." And so they did, but at the cost of brave Docherty's life. He arranged with his officers that the signal for attack should be when he jumped on to the little parapet at the moment when our intense covering fire began. Up he jumped. I see him now, poised there for a second while his gallant men leapt up as one man. An enemy bullet struck him in the forehead and he fell dead. But not one Strathcona wavered, and with a terrifying yell they dashed forward and seized the position. Again we captured many prisoners and still more machine guns, but Docherty's loss was an irreparable blow. Still we held on and awaited the reinforcements which we knew were coming.

A quaint episode occurred that night, which many of my men will remember. I think it did much to give me the extreme distaste for party politics which has remained with me ever since. It happened this way. The difficulty of maintaining communication with our forces in rear had become more and more acute. Messengers were almost always shot before they could get away with their messages. Any attempt to use flag signalling at once resulted in the shooting of the signaller. We had several helio lamps, but many of them were shot away with the men who were using them. At last we got one lamp into position in a place where it could not be, or at any rate was not, hit, and great was my joy when I was informed that we were in communication. I sent a message giving our position and numbers, saying that we had plenty of food and ammunition. I did not add that reinforcements would not be unwelcome, because I knew my friends in rear were well aware of

that fact, having already sent us all available help. This message got through. Then the answering helio, having acknowledged the message, winked again. I saw this, and anxiously awaited the message. In a few moments a signaller crawled along and handed it to me. It ran as follows:—"Reference Canadian General Election now proceeding, please note your signal troop will vote as a unit and not with the Royal Canadian Dragoons." I believe that although I have innumerable faults I am not a particularly blasphemous man; nevertheless, Geoffrey Brooke told me that for five minutes I expressed my opinion of politics and elections in language so lurid that it almost turned the air pink.

The next morning the Indian Cavalry Brigade, commanded by Colonel Gage, made an attack on our right. The attack failed, owing to the overwhelming machine gun and rifle fire which it encountered, but it certainly relieved pressure on our right, and enabled us to extend our line a little beyond Courcellette Farm, from whence we could enfilade the German position opposite our centre. Just afterwards Rankin's Indian Brigade, supported by three tanks, delivered a brilliant mounted charge on the left of our line. The tanks got close up to the German position, but were then all three knocked out and set on fire by direct hits. The cavalry charge succeeded completely. A battalion of the Coldstream Guards, supported by a squadron of Strathcona's, came up, and after desperate hand-to-hand fighting, cleared the wood on the left of our line, killing or capturing every German in it. And our left flank was at last quite secure.

I went to the scene of the attack. It was the strangest sight; about fifty Indian cavalymen; more than a hundred horses lying dead; many Strathcona's and many Coldstreamers, all in a little space of perhaps an acre. Further on, in a heap near the wood, more Strathcona's, more Coldstreams, and literally hundreds of dead Germans. There was much rifle fire, and I sheltered behind our burnt out tank. As I stood there I saw

three Indian cavalrymen coming towards me with fixed bayonets, and in the centre an officer of the Coldstream Guards. I afterwards learnt that he had crawled out into the open under very heavy rifle fire to bring succour to one of my Strathcona's, who had been shot through the thigh bone. He had given him water, propped him up in a shell hole, with his leg out straight, and arranged to bring him in in the darkness. The three Indian cavalrymen mistook him for a German officer, and having arrested him, were bringing him back to our lines. By great good fortune I knew one of the Indians, and induced them to stand aside and to release the officer. I said to him: "What's up?" He replied: "I was just wandering around when these Indians jumped on me. One of them said in broken English, 'Who are you?' And would you believe it, sir? When I said, 'Coldstream,' he paid not the least attention."

There was a time when people good humouredly laughed at the Guards for some of their engaging peculiarities of speech and manner. No man who served in the front line on the Western Front will ever laugh at them now whatever they do. Such a record of sustained heroism and discipline, during four and a quarter years of continuous fighting is, I believe, without parallel in any war, in any army.

The following evening we were relieved by an infantry brigade. During the process of relieving a very curious thing happened to me. The smash which I had had in the previous July had left me with my left arm so crippled that I could not lift the elbow more than a few inches. I had been to many doctors in England before I returned to the front, but they all told me it was impossible to cure. It was a great bother, as it made it extremely difficult to climb on to a horse on the near side. On this particular evening I got on to one of my horses, a very good looking bay, in order to ride round the position at dusk and make sure that all my men had been withdrawn and the position fully understood by our successors.

Geoffrey Brooke was with me, and we were just making our way over a disused gun pit when my horse was shot with a bullet through the neck; he fell like a stone about five feet over the bank and rolled on my left side. Geoffrey jumped off and asked if I was hurt. I said: "Not really, but I am afraid I have smashed up my left arm and collar-bone again." They pulled my poor horse off me, and I got on to another; when I lifted my injured arm, to my huge joy, although it caused me much pain, I found I could raise it much higher, and I stretched it out to its full extent. It took some weeks for the pain to subside, but from that day to this I have had complete freedom and use of that arm, cured of a serious injury by precisely the same means as that which originally caused it—surely a unique case of homœopathic treatment.

We had been very short of food during our days in action. We had unlimited German rations, but they were so nasty that we could not eat them, even when we were very hungry.

I was wet through, shivering with cold and in great pain, but I remember very well creeping with Geoffrey Brooke into a little hole in a railway embankment about a mile behind the front line and sleeping like a child for ten solid hours.

Our losses had been really heavy, but there was not a single grumble, and it was clear that none of them had in the least lost heart. They knew very well that they had done a fine thing and been really useful in a moment of great disaster. That afternoon we buried poor Docherty with such military honours as we could give, and early next morning, in a thick snow-storm, we rode away to refit. Fortunately, I found in MacDonald a man worthy to succeed Docherty in command of Strathconas.

Now to return to Prince Ruprecht of Bavaria. I have said that he told me the only way to restore confidence in the German Army was to launch a counter attack in the same place. I told him that I had heard vivid accounts of the first German

onslaught on the morning of November 30th from many of the survivors, who had come back with me into the battle. One officer, who had had a miraculous escape, was in the front line trench when the attack began. The first thing he saw was a German standing on our parapet, with a great bag full of hand grenades, which he was throwing up and down the trench. Almost simultaneously another German installed a machine-gun on the parapet and opened devastating fire right along the trench. Then and then only the crash of bombardment came, followed by the German infantry. Where he was, so many men had been killed or wounded by the bombs and machine-guns that the German infantry jumped over our parapet with hardly any loss. Prince Ruprecht replied: "Yes, it was an entirely novel kind of attack. You had overwhelmed us by complete surprise with your tanks. We wanted to try to do the same thing without tanks." It all depended on finding men brave enough to creep right up to and under our hastily constructed wire entanglements under cover of the mist. The disaster to us in that area was complete. The Germans bit off the whole of the salient which we had formed, and more besides. What our total losses were can only be computed. We were told at the time that we had lost fourteen thousand prisoners and fourteen hundred guns. One thing is certain, and was amply confirmed by Prince Ruprecht, that but for the swift arrival of the cavalry the disaster would have been far, far greater. Before this book is ended I shall give my reasons for saying that all the developments of modern warfare have rendered cavalry not less effective, but far more valuable than before. They saved the British Army in August, 1914; they saved the whole Cambrai front in November, 1917; in the interval they took their turn at duty in the trenches. I remember Lord French saying to me: "This is an odd war. First the cavalry saved the day as mounted men, and then proved themselves the equal of the best infantry in muddy trenches."

It took us some time to reorganise and refit, but the new lot of officers and men that were sent out to take the place of their fallen comrades had the same spirit as the old.

When the refitting was complete we rode up to our old haunts on the Omignon River, and took over, with the other two brigades of the Third Cavalry Division, the line extending from the front and to the left of Le Verquier to the Omignon River, just opposite St. Quentin. I was placed in command of the division in the trenches, and established my headquarters at a place called Smallfoot Wood, a few hundred yards south of Le Verquier.

The front was much the same as it had been six months before. There was still a wide "no man's land," the Germans still held their front line more slenderly than elsewhere, but there were many evidences of a large force and active preparations behind their line. I flew over St. Quentin and the neighbourhood on several occasions. One very favourable day when there was a thickish cloud about fifteen hundred feet up, we were enabled to dive out of the clouds for a few minutes, have a good look and swoop back again before the enemy had time to do anything except fire a few rifle shots at us.

I had had a long consultation with Gough, commanding the Fifth Army. He had shown me all the air photographs, and we were puzzled by what they called "lice"—little dark dots in long lines about a mile behind the German front line. There were thousands of these, and nobody could be quite sure what they were. Even from the comparatively low height at which we flew on the day I refer to we could not be certain of what we had seen. My pilot and I agreed at the time that they were probably an immense number of little dumps of shells, covered with tarpaulin to camouflage them as far as possible.

By degrees we began to learn of the magnitude of the German preparations. I dined with Gough one night at his headquarters, and he told me all he knew about them. At this time mustard gas was becoming a real nuisance; nobody had



THE AUTHOR ON "WARRIOR"
commanding Omignon River—Le Verguier Front, March 1918
Painted close to the front line by A. J. Munnings, R.A.

found a cure for it, you could not cover your whole body with indiarubber, but, short of that, the beastly stuff seemed to percolate through everything. The only consolation was to know that our gas shells were even more disagreeable than the enemy's. We now know that the preparations were on a far vaster scale than any of us dreamt of. I was told when I was in Germany, that when the plans were complete Ludendorf showed them to the Kaiser. He said: "I see that on the day nine hundred and eighty-six thousand men at the same moment will start to move to the west. Add another fourteen thousand, and that will make a million." And accordingly this was done. I do not vouch for this story, but Ludendorf speaks in his book of forty or fifty added divisions. One thing was quite clear, namely, that the Germans were keeping our front as quiet as they could, just as we had done at Cambrai, with a view to increasing the element of surprise. They would attempt to silence a battery, if it became too inconvenient, with a big volume of high explosive shells. Very often they succeeded, at any rate for the time being, for their shooting was more accurate than usual. But on the whole they kept things quiet. Discussing this with MacAndrew, he said: "Would it not be a good plan to choose this moment to attack them?" I quite agreed, and we planned an attack on almost exactly similar lines to what was termed the "Model Raid." I will describe this, because it was first conceived by the joint imagination of Colonel Patterson, commanding the Fort Garry Horse, while he was in command of the brigade during my absence, and Geoffrey Brooke. The method employed was so peculiar, indeed, unique, and the results so surprisingly successful, above all, the losses of the attacker were so unbelievably small that it is worth describing. The attacking troops, just over four hundred in number, crept under cover of the darkness to a slight fold in the ground about sixty yards from the German front line. It was so dark that I rode with them part of the way on my pony, and said a whispered good-bye and good luck to them

from half-way across "No Man's Land." Then the super-brave man, in this case Captain Price, of the Royal Canadian Dragoons, had to crawl forward with the largest size Bangalore torpedo, which was a thing exactly like a large cobra, filled with very high explosive. It was manhandled through the grass by six men, and pushed under the whole elaborate wire entanglement system in front of the German parapet, consisting of three lines of interlaced barbed wire. When all was ready Price was to crawl back twenty yards and fire the torpedo. The attacking troops comprised the whole of the regiment of the Royal Canadian Dragoons, not only the colonel and other officers and men, but orderlies, cooks and every human being belonging to the regiment. It was a jolly idea of theirs to take the whole lot, leaving no single man behind. The only stranger in the party was the Intelligence officer Ladenberg. The one principle of this novel form of attack was to have no zero hour or synchronised watches, but for the signal for the artillery barrage and the really tremendous burst of machine gun fire to be the explosion of the great torpedo. Price had complete freedom of choice as to the moment to get the Bangalore torpedo into position, and when to fire it. The difficulty of getting it into exactly the right place in pitch darkness was solved by accurately registering the spot with a four-inch howitzer shell during the day time, then firing at it at twenty minute intervals during the night. Of course we fired other shells of various kinds on different parts of the line during the same period, for in this strange attack it made no difference whether the Germans were asleep or awake. But one could not mistake this particular howitzer shell, because its burst was different in sound from any other. All went well that night. Price got his torpedo right under the wire, with its nose up against the German parapet. His six men crept away, then he crawled back with his electric wire, pressed the button and off it went with a tremendous roar and a blinding flash. On the instant up jumped the four hundred men and dashed over the breach, which was

complete. At the same time the artillery barrage fell, and, what was much more important, a machine gun barrage on an unprecedented scale. Over two hundred and fifty thousand bullets were discharged on fixed lines and targets in the first eight minutes. A long narrow lane, less than forty yards broad, was left on each side of the line of advance of the four hundred men, up a nearly straight trench to beyond the third German support line. Every other bit of the German front line and the three support lines were plastered with bullets.

Now here may I observe a peculiar fact which only long experience in the front line teaches one; a machine gun or rifle barrage is far more effective for the purpose of cowing the enemy than almost any artillery barrage can be. Especially does this apply to troops who have long experience of modern war. The reason is this: When the shell bursts you see where it bursts; all those men who are not actually under the barrage realise their comparative safety, and if they are stout-hearted people they put their heads above the parapet and fire at the enemy. But nobody can tell how near the bullet is that whizzes over his head. I have been just grazed by bullets on several occasions, and the sound made by these bullets is no different from the sound of others five, ten or twenty feet above one's head. The consequence is that in an intense machine gun barrage to lift the head above the parapet seems to be almost certain death, for it sounds as if all those that do not thud into the parapet sweep just over the top. Very few men are to be found who will lift their heads during the period of intense firing; the bravest wait a little until the stream abates.

The attacking troops were to spread out behind the last German support line, and, facing towards home, march straight back over the top, bombing the Germans wherever seen, but never, except the party set to fire the dug-outs with phosphorus bombs, getting into the trenches. The whole manœuvre had been practised again and again on a dummy system of trenches four miles behind our lines, until every man knew exactly where

to go and what to do. Everything worked according to plan. Every single German in the whole of the sector selected, of about a third of a mile, was killed or captured, including the officer commanding the sector. What the German losses in killed were is not accurately known, probably between two and three hundred. The commanding officer and seventy prisoners were brought back. Now comes the extraordinary part of this adventure. Our total casualties were: No killed, six slightly and one seriously wounded. I saw the whole operation from our front line, and thither the officer was brought me. He was a good looking major in one of the regiments of the Prussian Guard. He had been stunned by the butt end of a rifle when trying to protect his servant, but he was well enough to ride, and duly turned up at Smallfoot Wood. I shared a bottle of burgundy and a tin of sardines with him, and encouraged him to talk. This he did, but was extremely careful to say nothing of any interest. Nor was a second bottle of any avail. He was quite modest, and, like nearly all the real combatants, had no trace of ill will to his enemies. But, before he left in the motor car, which had been sent to take him to General Headquarters, he said: "Although your men are very brave and the French also, we shall win this war." I said, "When?" "Well," he said, "If we are to win it, we must do so before next May, and that we shall do." I asked why. He replied: "I hope I shall not offend you by what I say." I answered: "Not at all, say on." He said: "Your men are just as brave as ours, so are your officers, but our General Staff is cleverer than yours. It has been hard, but I am sure they have learnt the lessons of the war better than yours. This is why we shall win." He was not so very far wrong. The great German attack only a few weeks later was prepared with more skill and originality of conception than any that had preceded it. Indeed, I can go so far as to say that it was a difference not of degree, but of kind. Had they had a Napoleon or a Marlborough in command on March 27th—the day when

Foch took over the supreme command of the Allies—they must have won. Nothing could possibly have saved us. When I said this to Foch at the end of the war he replied, with that rare and wonderful smile of his: “Yes, you are right; we must be thankful.”

We received innumerable congratulations on the success of our raid, and I was directed to write a full account of it. I was engaged in doing so when the great attack fell, and it is only now that I repair the omission.

We continued to hold the Omignon le Verguier front for some weeks after our raid, each brigadier of the 3rd Cavalry Division commanding the divisional front in turn. My turn came again at the end of February, 1918. With me at this time was a brilliant, but unexpected addition to my staff. Munnings, the famous painter had been commissioned by the Canadian Government to make pictures of the Canadian Army wherever horses were concerned, and especially of the Canadian cavalry. He had been with me on several occasions before, and all my command loved the man. He wore a cloth cap and box-cloth gaiters, and would ride about on one of my horses, preferably Warrior, armed with a sheaf of pencils, a paint box, and a portable easel. General Kavanagh, the Cavalry Corps Commander, a fine soldier, a loyal and great-hearted man, but a bit of a martinet, found this strange apparition one day not far from the front line, and asked him, with some emphasis, who he was and what he was. Munnings replied: “Well, I don’t really know what I am. When they sent me out here they told me I was a genius.”

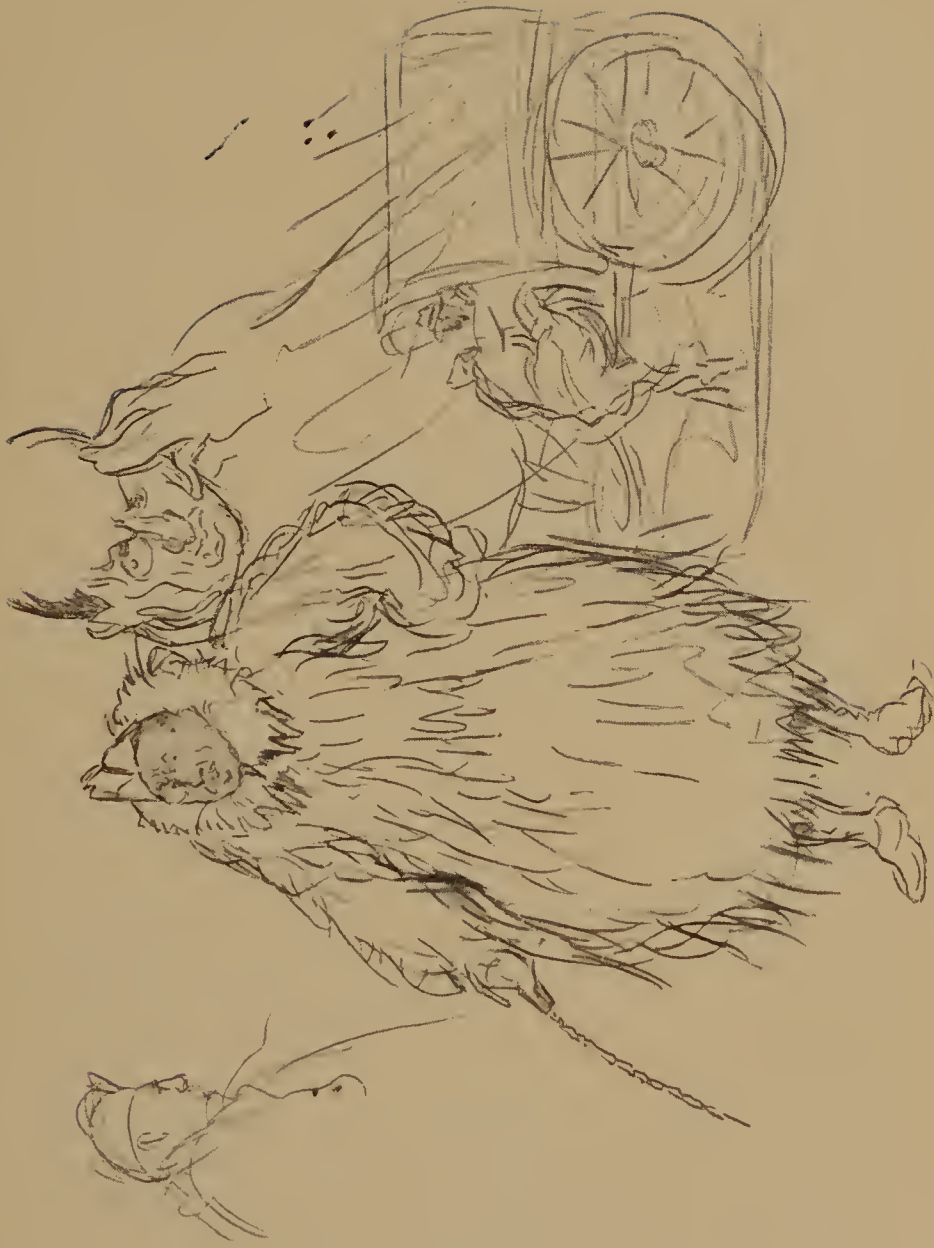
On this occasion Munnings turned up at my headquarters at Smallfoot Wood, half a mile south of le Verguier, announcing that he had been requested by the Canadian Government to make an equestrian portrait of me on Warrior. I had just returned on Warrior from my morning visit to the front line, and was covered with mud. However, I took up the position he ordered and he commenced to paint. Presently he said:

"What's that background I'm painting in with those scarecrow trees—how far is that from our front line." I replied: "About a mile." He said: "Well, I suppose the trees are about two miles away, so that makes three from the Germans." "Oh! no," I said, "the trees are a mile the other side of our front line." "Then that makes us one mile from the Germans," said Munnings, and went on painting.

Although now so famous, in those days Munnings was but little known to the general public. He was practically blind in one eye, so failed, in spite of every endeavour, to get accepted for any branch of the Service. A queer thing was that he could see so much more with his one eye than others could see with two. He has told me that his principal trouble during this time was the bitter cold; sharp frosts every night, and canvas lean-to's the only shelter.

Another acute sufferer from the cold was my Headquarters Staff interpreter, Count Estchegoyen. He was one of the officials of the Suez Canal Company, and had spent the greater part of his life in the torrid atmosphere of Suez or Port Said. The mid-winter cold of Northern France ate into his very bones. His devoted mother sent him from Paris a fur coat so thick as to defy even the bitterest weather. The Count donned this coat, and, blessing his mother's name, advanced to his horse. But not only could he not get near his own horse, all the other horses stampeded at this strange sight and smell. No doubt they all thought he was a real bear. I saw the episode and Munnings sketching Estchegoyn in his rage.

The first fortnight of March was a strange time for us, wondering each day whether the following dawn would see the opening of the great German attack. Gough came often to see me; one day we spent many hours together going round the defences of le Verguier. The heroic defence of this "strong point" on March 21st, and the following day and night, long after it had been surrounded by the enemy, is one of the epics of the war.



MY HEADQUARTER'S STAFF INTERPRETER, COUNT ESTCHEGOYEN
(Taken from a page of the sketch-book of A. J. Munnings, R.A. These sketches were all made in the
line in the Spring of 1918).

Many criticisms have been made of General Gough's plan of defence. I wish to put on record my firm opinion that the task which he was set was beyond human power to fulfil. The German forces were so vast, the concentration of artillery and especially of gas shell so unprecedented, the method of attack so novel and so well conceived, that Gough's Fifth Army was bound to be overwhelmed on both sides of the Omignon River on that fateful 21st of March. Of course mistakes were made, war is a series of mistakes. In the light of what we now know, things might have been done which would have mitigated our losses, but, speaking with the knowledge of one who was responsible for sectors of this front for nearly a whole year, I say, unhesitatingly, that what I have written above is true, and that no human foresight could have avoided disaster. In the middle of March we were relieved by an infantry division, which took over our front and an extension to the south. I stayed on for two days after my brigade had gone, then rejoined them at their billets in the park of the Marquis de Bargemont. His château had been von Kluck's headquarters in August, 1914, and he told me of the confidence of the German staff at that time that the war would be over in a few months. Here I found my friend William Orpen, who had come to paint my portrait. He had been a long time at the war, sometimes at Amiens, often wandering about the Somme battlefield. His acute vision saw things, or perhaps I should say, saw through things in a way hidden from us. Certainly he understood the war from a new angle; without doubt it distressed him greatly. I had seen him from time to time, and rejoiced to see him again, although I warned him that it was certain that there would be no time to finish the portrait.

At this time came the news that Geoffrey Brooke was appointed to command his regiment, the 16th Lancers. I rejoiced at his promotion, but grieved, as every Canadian grieved, to lose him from the brigade. I appointed Connolly, of Strathcona's, in his place; the best choice I ever made.

On the night of the 19th of March the Marquis de Barge-mont gave a dinner to his honoured guests as he called us, and as, indeed, he treated us. He made a perfectly phrased little speech, recalling the German occupation of his home, and expressing his joy that he and his household were now secure under the protection of the British Army. I made what I thought to be an appropriate reply, as we all drank this brave old man's health in his wonderful claret. Alas! within a week the Germans were again in occupation of his château, Orpen only just escaping with the unfinished portraits.

Early on the morning after the dinner party I was summoned to London by telegram to confer with the Canadian authorities on recruiting and other problems. On the boat at Boulogne I met General Currie, commanding the Canadian Army Corps, who had received a similar summons. As we travelled over together he told me that he was convinced that the great German attack might come at any hour, and that he hated leaving his men at such a moment. We agreed together that should the attack begin we would return at once whatever our orders might be.

The following evening, the 21st, the Prime Minister and Maurice Hankey dined with me and my wife. It must have been the shortest dinner we ever had together. They told me that there had been an attack that morning, that details were lacking, that my command being out of the line could not be involved at the moment. Then they wished us well and went away together.

I have since learnt of the dauntless determination with which Lloyd George met the crisis, resulting from the greatest disaster to British arms in the whole of our history. All of us who were involved in that great battle may be thankful that he was at the helm in those fateful hours.

I arranged to be woken very early. In the *Daily Mail* I read, "gallant defence of le Verguier." Within an hour I was at Victoria Station, where, sure enough, I found Currie. A

train took us to Folkestone, with many soldiers returning from leave. At Folkestone we were told that the boat would not leave. Currie and I were in a fever to rejoin our men, and protested violently. At last it was arranged that the boat should go to Dover with us two and half a dozen staff officers, and thence to Calais. At Calais there was an array of motor cars with nobody to claim one, so I took the fastest looking one I could see, left a chit of apology to the owner with the military police sergeant, and started off to find my men. I decided that my best plan was to make for Noyon, hoping to arrive there by daylight of next day, the 23rd. Boulogne was in complete darkness, with an air raid of exceptional violence going on. But I managed to get some food, fill up with petrol and stores and resume my journey. Towards daybreak I met a concourse of people the like of which I had never seen. Not only the French civilian population with carts and wagons of all descriptions, but crowds of men of every race and colour, all fleeing from the wrath to come. I was told by a staff officer whom I found coolly but vainly endeavouring to direct this strange crowd, that eleven races were represented. I can well believe it, for I saw Annamese, Chinese, Senegalese, Burmans, Cingalese and many others. What had happened was this. Behind the host of fighting men on a siege front stabilized and immovable for nearly three and a half years, there had been built up an army of men making and repairing roads, railways and the innumerable things required by the millions of men at the front. When a broad section of that front had been caved right in the labour parties behind had to retire also. But while the front line troops stuck it out to the last, and the line receded but slowly, these labour parties, once started, blundered aimlessly along to the west. With great difficulty I managed to get through to Noyon. There I found General Butler, commanding the Eighth Corps, and learned much of the situation from him.

It had been an unparalleled disaster, guns in thousands had been captured, men had been killed and wounded in tens of

thousands, and cut off and captured unwounded in tens of thousands. The whole 5th Army was almost destroyed, but our men had given as good as they got. We know now how true this was. Ludendorf, in his memoirs, speaks haughtily of the capture of eighty to ninety thousand prisoners in the first few days; he does not disclose the frightful casualties, three times that number, inflicted on his advancing hosts by the tenacious British, Australasian, and Canadian soldiers.

Butler told me where I should find the greater part of my command, then wrote out a paper appointing me to command all other cavalry detachments in the area, and directing me to place my force at the disposal of the French General Diebold, who was taking over this portion of the Noyon front. I followed out these instructions, found General Diebold, and during March 23rd and 24th directed a series of rearguard actions in accordance with his plans. On the night of the 24th General Pitman took over all the cavalry except General Harman's force, and I found myself again with my whole brigade, including my precious two batteries of Royal Canadian Horse Artillery. General Diebold issued a special "Order of the Day," which lies before me as I write, praising in most generous terms the action of the British and Canadian cavalry under my command.

But, indeed, throughout this time of terrible ordeal, the cavalry rendered service of a value out of all proportion to their numbers. Pitman's Force, Harman's Force, Bertram Portal's Brigade, and many others, were here, there and everywhere, delaying the enemy, striking him in flank. Without them I am quite sure the retreat of March, 1918, would have been a débâcle, and Germany would have won the war. In an earlier chapter of this book I have endeavoured to describe similar services rendered by the British cavalry in the retreat from Mons in August, 1914. It is the strangest *non sequitur* in military history that, as a result of a great war in which the cavalry on the Western Front twice saved our Army from

COUNTRY BETWEEN AMIENS &



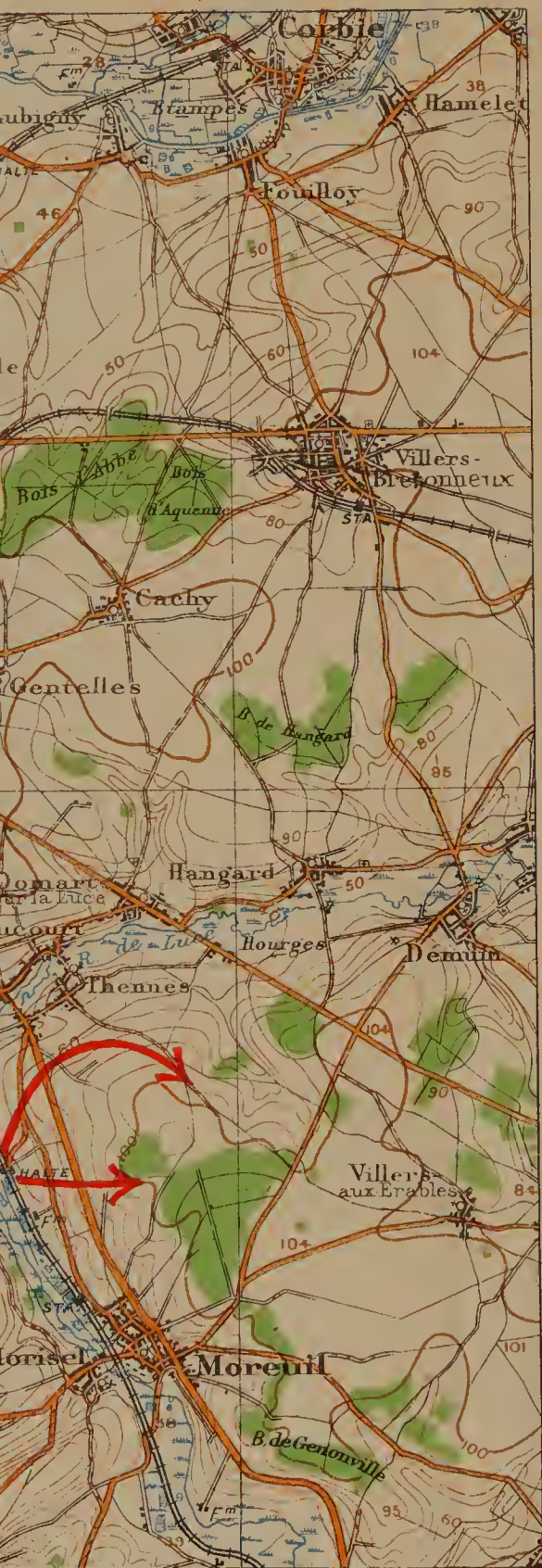
Reproduced by permission of the Controller H.M. Stationery Office 1929

Attack by Canadian Cavalry Brigade,
morning of 30th March 1918 →

Scale 100,000 or 1 Inch to 1.58

Mile 1 0 1 2 3

MOREUIL



Printed at the War Office, 1929

iles

5 Miles

ruin, while the lion-hearted Philip Chetwode, with a great part of the cavalry of the empire struck the decisive blow to end the war on the Eastern Front, the cavalry should have been reduced to half their previous number. I pray that wiser counsels may some day prevail. We fought delaying actions west of Noyon and at Montdidier, where Harvey of Strathcona's again distinguished himself. I told him to reconnoitre Fontaine-sous-Montdidier; by a brilliant little manœuvre he attacked and took the place.

On the evening of March 29th, we lay at Boves. Early in the morning of March 30th Pitman came to see me. He told me that the German advance continued, and that the situation was grave in the extreme; we must do what we could to delay the continued onslaught; the German advance guard had already captured the Moreuil Ridge, and were pouring troops into the Bois de Moreuil on the Amiens side of the ridge. Villers-Bretonneux, on the ridge further north, was still held by us, but was being very heavily attacked. I remember his final words, "Go to the support of the infantry just beyond Castel, this side of the Moreuil Ridge. Don't get too heavily involved—you will be needed later." Pitman was a cool hand if ever there was one. From the way he spoke I knew that things were pretty desperate.

We were soon on our way. The roads were blocked with men and vehicles of all kinds, but the country was open, and we moved straight across it at a trot. I galloped forward on my faithful Warrior to the village of Castel, leaving my brigade more than two miles behind. As I rode down the main street the road was spattered with bullets. I had with me only my brigade major—Major Connolly, now commanding Lord Strathcona's Horse Royal Canadians—and my well-beloved aide-de-camp, Captain Prince Antoine, of Orleans.

At a cross roads we found the French General, commanding the division on our right. Our front line was spread out before us, some six hundred yards away, just across the River Luce.

Enemy fire came from the lower part of the Bois de Moreuil, some fourteen hundred yards away, but as we turned the corner behind the little house where the French General stood we were in complete security.

I saw at once that the position was desperate, if not fatal. If the enemy captured the ridge which I had just left, the main line from Amiens to Paris would be definitely broken, and I knew already that when that happened the two armies—the French and the British—would be compelled to retire; the French on Paris, and our Army on the Channel ports. All our sea power, even the great host of determined soldiers now crossing from the United States would not avail to save the Allied cause. All that we had fought for, and bled for, for nearly four years would be lost.

I asked the French General what the position was. He said that the enemy was still advancing in overwhelming force; that strong detachments were already on the outskirts of the village of Moreuil, some two miles to our right; that his right flank was unprotected, and that he had already sent orders to his troops to fall back.

I must ask those who have read this book to bear with me and believe that what I now write is true. I knew that moment to be the supreme event of my life. I believed that if nothing were done the retreat would continue, and the war would be lost. I looked at the spire of Amiens Cathedral, which, in some strange way all through the war, had been an inspiration to me. In those brief moments all kinds of sayings that I had known as a boy came back to me:

“Death is a fearful thing

And shamed life a hateful.”

“Death is better than dishonour.”

“Vitrix causa deis placuit sed victa Catoni.”

“By faith ye shall move mountains.”

All through the long years of war one had gone about in a matter of fact way, taking one's risk with the rest, and trying to give the best chance to the courageous men under one's command; laughing at flamboyant phrases; bored with all "high faluting" talk. But this moment was quite different: I knew that this was what all my life had been for.

I said to the French General: "We must retake the Moreuil Ridge." He replied: "Yes, if we do not, all is lost, but it cannot be done." I said: "I have ample troops, and will send the orders now. Will you send orders to stand fast in Moreuil?" He saw from my badges of rank that I was only a brigadier, and said: "But your poor little force cannot do it. The Germans have a whole division in the wood this side of the ridge." I answered: "I have the whole of the British cavalry coming to support me, and following me, le 'grand push' Foch." Foch had been appointed Commander-in-Chief three days earlier, and rumour, which flies so swiftly in all armies had it that a great mass of manoeuvre under his command was coming to deliver the counter stroke. I do not think the French general believed me, but he saw that I was in deadly earnest. He said: "Very well, let us send our orders." I gave mine to Connolly for the capture of the ridge: the French General at once sent his orderly with precise orders to hold on to Moreuil at all costs. Then, with my aide-de-camp, an orderly with a little red pennant and my signal troop, I galloped down the hill, across the bridge over the Luce, through a field of young wheat and over a road to our front line. A few bullets flew about, but not many, for we were in dead ground, except to the enemy at the point of the wood.

As I rode through our front line, who were lying down and firing, I said to a young captain: "We are going to retake the ridge. Fire on both sides of us, as close as you can, while the rest of us go up." He knelt up and shouted: "Good luck to you, sir." Our infantry opened a glorious fire on both sides of us as we galloped on. Five out of about twelve of my

signal troop were shot by the enemy, but the remaining seven reached the wood, jumped off and opened fire. My orderly jammed the red flag into the ground at the point of the wood, and I looked back, to see my gallant brigade galloping forward by the way I had come. The battle has been described in the *Canadian Defence Quarterly* and elsewhere. But the results of it were so utterly out of proportion to the numbers engaged, that it may be considered worth while for me to give an account of it.

The orders I had sent back to the commanders of my on-coming horsemen were as follows. After crossing the River Luce and our own front line, the Royal Canadian Dragoons were to send one squadron to the right of the Bois de Moreuil, occupy the south-east corner, and get in touch with the French in the south-east of the village of Moreuil. The other two squadrons were to gallop round the left face of the wood and endeavour to seize the north-east corner of it.

Lord Strathcona's Horse were to follow close behind these two squadrons of the Dragoons, and send one squadron forward to gallop right round the north-east corner, engage the German reinforcements who were entering the wood, by mounted attack, and having dispersed them, occupy the eastern face of the wood. The remaining two squadrons of Strathcona's were to enter the wood just beyond my headquarters at the southern point, fight their way through and join their comrades on the eastern face. Fort Garry's were to be in reserve with me, ready to occupy the high ground between Moreuil and Hangard, and thus get in touch with our troops still holding Villiers.

Soon the brigade arrived. It is curious how galloping horses seem to magnify in power and number; it looked like a great host sweeping forward over the open country. I galloped up to Flowerdew, who commanded the leading squadron of Strathcona's, and as we rode along together I told him that his was the most adventurous task of all, but that I was confident he would succeed. With his gentle smile he turned to me and

said: "I know, sir, I know, it is a splendid moment. I will try not to fail you."

The Dragoons just ahead of us had suffered heavily and had failed to reach the north-east corner. But they had turned into the wood and engaged the enemy. The air was alive with bullets, but nobody minded a bit. It was strange to see the horses roll over like rabbits, and the men, when unwounded, jump up and run forward, sometimes catching the stirrups of their still mounted comrades.

I went with Flowerdew to where we could see round the corner of the wood. He had lost comparatively few men up till then. He wheeled his four troops into line, and with a wild shout, a hundred yards in front of his men, charged down on the long thin column of Germans, marching into the wood. What happened is best described in the reserved language recording his Victoria Cross, posthumous alas.

Flowerdew, Lieut. Gordon Muriel. For most conspicuous bravery and dash when in command of a squadron detailed for special services of a very important nature. On reaching his first objective Lieut. Flowerdew saw two lines of enemy, each about sixty strong, with machine guns in the centre and flanks; one line being about two hundred yards behind the other. Realising the critical nature of the operation and how much depended on it, Lieut. Flowerdew ordered a troop under Lieut. Harvey, V.C., to dismount and carry out a special movement, while he led the remaining three troops to the charge. The squadron (less one troop) passed over both lines, killing many of the enemy with the sword; and wheeling about galloped on them again. Although the squadron had then lost about 70 per cent. of its members, killed and wounded from rifle and machine gun fire directed on it from the front and both flanks, the enemy broke and retired. The survivors of the squadron then established themselves in a position where they were joined,

after much hand-to-hand fighting, by Lieut. Harvey's party. Lieut. Flowerdew was dangerously wounded through both thighs during the operation, but continued to cheer his men. There can be no doubt that this officer's great valour was the prime factor in the capture of the position.

A man with him told me his last words as he and his horse finally crashed to the ground—he had two bullet wounds through his chest and was shot through both thighs, but he still had strength to shout quite loudly, "Carry on boys. We have won." And so they had.

A short time later, when I arrived on the eastern face with the supporting squadron I found the survivors of this desperate charge securely ensconced in a little ditch, which bordered the wood, in twos and threes, each with a German machine-gun and with three or four Germans lying dead by their side. It was recorded that seventy Germans were killed by sword thrust alone outside the wood. I saw perhaps another two or three hundred lying there, who had been killed by machine gun fire. In those brief moments we lost over eight hundred horses, but only three hundred men killed and wounded. The fanatical valour of my men on this strange day was equalled by the Bavarian defenders now surrounded in the wood. Hundreds of them were shot while they ran to their left to join their comrades still holding on to the south-east corner. Hundreds more stood their ground and were shot at point-blank range or were killed with the bayonet. Not one single man surrendered. As I rode through the wood on Warrior with the dismounted squadrons of Strathcona's I saw a handsome young Bavarian twenty yards in front of me miss an approaching Strathcona, and, as a consequence, receive a bayonet thrust right through the neck. He sank down with his back against a tree, the blood pouring from his throat. As I came close up to him I shouted out in German, "Lie still, a stretcher bearer will look after you." His eyes in his ashen-grey face seemed to blaze fire as

PROGR

SS OF THE GERMAN OFFENSIVE

21ST MARCH - 4TH APRIL, 1918.

Scale 1:500,000

1 in. = 7.9 mls. or 1 cm. = 5 kilos.

Miles 5 4 3 2 1 0 5 10 Miles
Kilos. 5 4 3 2 1 0 5 10 15 Kilos.

H^YARMY



he snatched up his rifle and fired his last shot at me, saying loudly: "Nein, nein. Ich will ungefangen sterben." Then he collapsed in a heap.

After seeing the position at the eastern face of the wood I galloped back to my headquarters, which Connolly had moved up to about a third of the way along the northern front.

I sent messages to Pitman and to the French Divisional Commander at Castel, telling them of our success. It was necessary too to get a message to Villers-Bretonneux, a few miles to our left on the same ridge which we had captured. Villers-Bretonneux was completely hidden by a dense cloud of black smoke illumined each second by the bright flashes of the bursts of the German big shells. In all my experience I had never seen such an intense concentrated bombardment. I gave identical written messages to Antoine d'Orleans and to Colonel Young of the Dragoons, also on my staff, telling them to gallop by different routes into Villers-Bretonneux, find the commander, describe our position and assure him that I was confident of being able to hold on to our portion of the ridge for the rest of the day. Young was to go to the west of Hangard, Antoine, on his very fast horse, was to try and get through direct. Antoine had only gone 300 yards when his horse was shot dead. He jumped up unhurt, waving his hand for another horse. My orderly, Corporal King, galloped up to him and gave him his horse, also a very fast animal. It was wonderful to see Antoine swing himself into the saddle completely unconcerned and gallop off again. This time he got through, and gave the message to both the Australian and British commanders in Villers-Bretonneux. It is a most precious recollection to me that for his gallant action on this day Marshal Foch himself invested him in my presence with the order of a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour. Alas! he was to be killed soon afterwards, but his country may well be proud of this valiant son of the House of France; his Canadian comrades will ever cherish his memory.

Young, too, got through to Villers-Bretonneux; the account that he and Antoine brought of the intense enemy shelling and the concentrated rifle and machine gun fire, gave me some idea of the terrible ordeal through which the Australian and British defenders were passing.

Both commanders replied to my message that they could hold on to their place and would be obliged if we could hold on to ours. I like to think that our recapture of Moreuil Ridge helped the heroic defenders of Villers-Bretonneux; certainly, but for them, we should have been surrounded and destroyed.

We held the position and extended our line to the left towards Hangard. By that time the whole of the Fort Garry Horse were engaged, and I had no further reserves. But then Geoffrey Brooke came up with the 16th Lancers following him. I knew he would come at such a moment wherever he might be. Together we rode through the wood towards the south-east corner, from which we had never completely dislodged the Germans. We saw a line of men two hundred yards away. I said to Geoffrey: "They look like Germans, they should not be here." As he took out his field glasses they opened fire. "Drive them out," I said to Geoffrey. "While I go to the eastern face of the wood." He brought up his regiment and drove them back. Indeed, but for him and the rest of the cavalry, which General Pitman had available to send up in support, we could never have held on. As it was we did hold on. A month later, when I met Foch and Weygand his Chief of Staff, the latter said: "While you held on to that ridge I got ninety-five batteries of Seventy-fives into position, and during the ensuing thirty-six hours they fired one million, three hundred thousand shells." As night fell the enemy shelling increased in intensity; for two or three hours shells of all calibres rained on the wood, including much gas shell. But, as we were occupying the outside edge of the wood and the ridge to the left of it, we suffered comparatively few further casualties. I was going round our front line with

Connolly when the shelling was at its height, so that we escaped all the gas. Moreover, the gas shelling showed that the Germans had no intention of pressing an infantry attack for some hours, since gas hangs about in a wood for a long time. This was a relief, because, although we knew that we had the measure of the enemy even in great numbers by daylight, at night numbers tell. Still, even at night, we had one priceless support. All through the fight, from the first moment of attack, our two batteries of Royal Canadian Horse Artillery made the most wonderfully close and accurate shooting. After all these years we knew each other so well, and Elkins and his gunners knew their guns so well that we knew we were safe in the closest barrage. Elkins had his forward observers with their telephones up in the front line, who, at any moment, could and did direct a fierce fire on any point.

About midnight an infantry brigade came up to relieve us. In the darkness the relief was a long business, but at 2.30 a.m. on March 31st, it was complete, and Connolly and I rode back to a ruined house just over the River Luce, which Antoine had found for our headquarters.

Next morning I rode round the brigade, which had bivouacked in and near the Bois le Senekat and tried to thank them adequately for their unflinching courage. They were weary, but cheerful as ever. But their task in this great battle was not done. Late that night I received a message from Pitman summoning me to a conference at his headquarters a few miles north. There I learned that the whole of Pitman's cavalry, including our brigade, was to make an attack next morning on the ridge above Hangard-en-Santerre. It was impossible to make a reconnaissance in the darkness, so we had to make a plan as best we could by map. It was decided that I should command the attacking force, consisting of my own brigade, and as many more regiments as Pitman could spare. We decided to encircle Hangard Wood under cover of a brief but intense machine gun barrage, and preliminary orders were

written out. I arranged to meet the commanding officers and the machine gun officers at the cross roads just west of Hangard village.

At dawn the next morning, April 1st, I went round the position with the senior artillery and machine gun officers; they skilfully laid down their lines of fire. Then to the conference in a ruined estaminet at the cross roads. I explained the plan to the commanding officers, ending up by telling them that it was a good plan and certain to succeed. I do not think that one of them believed in success, for indeed it seemed to be almost a hopeless enterprise, but not one of them made the least demur. Geoffrey Brooke, who had made a personal reconnaissance, gave us some very useful information, then off they all went to bring up their commands to the jumping-off place on the wooded banks of the little River Luce. I had told them that my headquarters would be in the easternmost house of the little village of Hangard on the east side of the Luce, and that all reports and prisoners were to be sent there.

My brigade was again to have the rôle of encircling the wood, which we knew to be held by the enemy. It was much to ask of these valiant men, so soon after their desperate enterprise at Moreuil. But though greatly depleted in numbers, they were quite unshaken in morale. There was a strange stillness in the air as I rode forward with Connolly, my orderly, Corporal King, and my signallers, across the bridge and so to my headquarters in the easternmost house. We did not know for certain whether the Germans held the village or not, for it was only a few hundred yards from the nearest point of the wood. Fortunately, it was empty, except for two men who ran away up the hill from the far end of the village as we crossed the bridge.

So I waited at the doorway of my headquarters for our barrage to begin; those were the most anxious moments of my life. Had it been possible to make the final attack mounted, my anxiety would have been far less. But it was impossible

to get the whole force across the single bridge by which alone horses could cross, without the certainty of disaster, so the final attack must perforce be made dismounted.

At last came the tremendous rattle of our machine guns, followed the scream of our shells; simultaneously on each side of me the cavalrymen rushed forward to the attack. Colonel Patterson led the Canadian Brigade with great skill and dash, and manfully they fulfilled their task. But so did every unit, everyone reaching their objective.

As I walked up the road I met the first batch of prisoners, a party of seventy Germans, headed by an officer marching sullenly along. I told the officer to walk straight down the road and surrender himself to the first party he met. It so happened that I was all alone, and I wondered whether the temptation to these enemies to crack me over the head would be irresistible. But the officer dutifully saluted and said "Yes." I watched them for a moment, and then ran on up the road. Soon I came to our front line, on the far side of the wood. Dead Germans were lying about in great numbers, and a tremendous rattle of machine-gun fire was going on. This was explained by the fact that we had captured thirteen machine-guns in the wood alone, and had brought them all into action against the advancing Germans. Then I ran back as fast as I could to my headquarters to send off duplicate messages to General Pitman, telling him of our complete success.

We were exposed to some artillery fire from our own side—our advance having been so much quicker than was expected, but messages soon put this right. Conversely, the Germans learnt of our capture of the wood and ridge, and opened up severe shell-fire—a great proportion of it gas shell—on the wood and the road leading back to my headquarters.

In order to go round the whole position I thought it wise to send for my horse and gallop to the top of the ridge, which is always the safest way. My horse was killed, but I was unhurt and went round the whole position with Patterson and other

officers. On my way back down the road for the purpose of sending a further report to Pitman, I saw a sergeant of Strathcona's, whom I knew well, lying in a fresh shell-hole with much foam flecked with blood coming out of his mouth. Then, on the spur of the moment, I did an incredibly foolish thing for a man of my long experience. Instead of holding my breath and running on, I went up to the man to say I would send stretcher-bearers for him. As I drew breath to speak I had intense pain in my throat, exactly as if someone had plunged a dagger down. Indeed, for a second I thought that a bullet had traversed my gullet. Of course, I had swallowed a real dose of gas. Thousands of men I have spoken to have had just the same sensation. I had a violent fit of coughing which soon abated; nevertheless, I continued to cough, especially at night, for many weeks to come. I managed to get back to my headquarters and send off the message to Pitman. Frankly at that moment I did not care a scrap for the pain in my throat, for again my Brigade had succeeded in a forlorn hope. Great credit was given to them, as the succeeding paragraphs show. It is true that the actual encircling and capture of Rifle Wood was achieved by them, but this was only rendered possible by the really desperate valour of the famous regiments under my command that day. The 4th Hussars, 5th Lancers, 16th Lancers, 6th Dragoon Guards, 3rd Hussars, Oxford Hussars (Yeomanry), 12th Lancers, 20th Hussars, and the Scots Greys must have their due share of the striking eulogies which close this narrative.

We were relieved by the Infantry late on the night of April 1st. I handed over command of the position early in the morning of April 2nd, and rode back in the pale light to find my Brigade.

Both my horses had been killed, but the faithful Corporal King found me a stray mule.

On the following day, April 3rd, Rawlinson, now commanding the 4th Army to which the survivors of the 5th were joined,



MARSHAL FOCH

From the painting in the Imperial War Museum by Sir William Orpen

rode over to our bivouac with his brilliant Chief of Staff, Montgomery, and addressed us. He said:

"We have been through a terrible crisis. Your recapture of the Moreuil Ridge was a great feat of arms. It did much to turn the tide and save Amiens. But that is not all. It was vital to the saving of Amiens that Rifle Wood should again be in our hands, but there was no infantry force at hand for the purpose. I knew that you were depleted in numbers and very tired, and that you had already done more than your share. But I called upon you for the task, as I felt that there was no one else available who could do it successfully. I have asked that a cable be sent to Canada informing the Canadian people of your splendid deeds."

Speeches to soldiers are seldom a success; but this was an exception. We knew that Rawlinson was a great soldier, we knew that he meant what he said, and his praise put heart into us all.

Next evening, April 4th, the official communique from the Western Front, published in the newspapers the following morning, contained these words:

"During the past few days in the heavy fighting south of the River Luce, the Canadian Cavalry Brigade greatly distinguished itself in many successful actions both mounted and dismounted."

And there this chapter in my life must end. It had been my dream all through that I should be with my men right up to the end of the war. But it was not to be. As soon as we could be spared from the Battle of Amiens I went to the Duchess of Westminster's Hospital, near Etaples, with Patterson, who had also been gassed. They told me I had swallowed all three kinds, chlorine, mustard and some of the dreaded phosgene, and that I was very lucky to be alive.

Haig most kindly sent one of his aides-de-camp, young Botha, to inquire after me.

In spite of wonderfully skilful treatment, which enabled me

to return to my Brigade, the cough would not stop, and in May, to my bitter disappointment, I was ordered home.

Soon after I was given a step in rank. Foch sent me a cigarette-case, with a really touching inscription of appreciation and friendship, in order to console me.

For my services I received mentions in despatches, promotions, honours and rewards in numbers far beyond my merits. But all these things, highly as I prized them, as who would not, were as dust in the balance in comparison with the knowledge that my Canadian comrades trusted and cared for me even as I cared for and trusted them.

And so I dedicate this book to them in memory of our service together, and especially of their great achievement in the last phase of the most terrible battle of the World War.

Those who read this final chapter may consider that I attribute more importance to their action in those fateful days than the facts warrant.

I think not.

Here is the message which Marshal Foch wrote to me, begging me to read it to the survivors of that gallant band when I visited them in their homes after the war:

“Je n’oublie pas l’héroïsme de la vaillante Brigade de Cavalerie Canadienne. Au mois de Mars, 1918, la bataille était aux portes d’Amiens. Il s’agissait de maintenir à tout prix l’union intime de nos deux armées. Le 30 Mars, à Moreuil, le 1er Avril à Hangard en Santerre, elle réussit, par son magnifique entrain et son élan offensif à tenir l’ennemi en échec et à briser définitivement son élan. En grande partie, grâce à elle, la situation, angoissante au début de la bataille était rétablie.”

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "J. Foch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right at the bottom.

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